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THE

LIFE AND LETTERS,

OF

WILLIAM COWPER, Esq.

WITH

REMARKS

ON

EPISTOLARY WRITERS.

By WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esq.

A NEW EDITION.

21310

"*Obversatur oculis ille vir, quo neminem ætas nostra graviorem, sanctiorem, subtiliorem denique tulit: quem ego quum ex admiratione diligere cæpissem, quod evenire contrà solet, magis admiratus sum, postquam penitus inspexi. Inspexi enim penitus: nihil a me ille secretum, non joculare, non serium, non triste, non lætum.*"

Plinii Epist. Lib. 4, *Ep.* 17.

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21310

THE

LIFE OF COWPER.

PART THE SECOND.

Ανηρ ηδιστος αοιδων.

A NEW æra opens in the history of the poet, from an incident that gave fresh ardour and vivacity to his fertile imagination. In 1781, he became acquainted with a lady, highly accomplished herself, and singularly happy in animating and directing the fancy of her poetical friends. The world will perfectly agree with me in this eulogy, when I add, that to this lady we are primarily indebted for the poem of the Task, for the ballad of John Gilpin, and for the translation of Homer. But in my lively sense of her merit, I am almost forgetting my imme-

diate duty, as the biographer of the poet, to introduce her circumstantially to the acquaintance of my reader.

A lady, whose name was Jones, was one of the few neighbours admitted in the residence of the retired poet. She was the wife of a clergyman, who resided at the village of Clifton, within a mile of Olney. Her sister, the widow of Sir Robert Austen, Bart. came to pass some time with her in the summer of 1781; and as the two ladies chanced to call at a shop in Olney, opposite to the house of Mrs. Unwin, Cowper observed them from his window.—Although naturally shy, and now rendered more so by his very long illness, he was so struck with the appearance of the stranger, that on hearing she was sister to Mrs. Jones, he requested Mrs. Unwin to invite them to tea. So strong was his reluctance to admit the company of strangers, that after he had occasioned this invitation, he was for a long time unwilling to join the little party; but having forced himself at last to engage in conversation with Lady Austen, he was so reanimated by her colloquial talents, that he attended the ladies on their return to Clifton, and from that time continued to cultivate the regard of his new acquaintance with such assi-

duous attention, that she soon received from him the familiar and endearing title of sister Ann.

The great and happy influence, which an incident, that seems at first sight so trivial, produced very rapidly on the imagination of Cowper, will best appear from the following epistle, which, soon after Lady Austen's return to London for the winter, the poet addressed to her, on the seventeenth of December, 1781.

Dear Anna—between friend and friend,
Prose answers every common end;
Serves, in a plain and homely way,
T' express th' occurrence of the day;
Our health, the weather, and the news;
What walks we take, what books we chuse;
And all the floating thoughts we find
Upon the surface of the mind.

But when a poet takes the pen,
Far more alive than other men,
He feels a gentle tinkling come
Down to his finger and his thumb,
Deriv'd from nature's noblest part,
The centre of a glowing heart:
And this is what the world, who knows
No flights above the pitch of prose,

His more sublime vagaries slighting,
Denominates an itch for writing.
No wonder I, who scribble rhyme,
To catch the triflers of the time,
And tell them truths divine and clear,
Which, couch'd in prose, they will not hear;
Who labour hard to allure, and draw,
The loiterers I never saw,
Should feel that itching, and that tingling,
With all my purpose intermingling,
To your intrinsic merit true,
When call'd t' address myself to you.

Mysterious are His ways, whose power
Brings forth that unexpected hour,
When minds, that never met before,
Shall meet, unite, and part no more;
It is th' allotment of the skies,
The hand of the Supremely Wise,
That guides and governs our affections,
And plans and orders our connexions;
Directs us in our distant road,
And marks the bounds of our abode.
Thus we were settled when you found us,
Peasants and children all around us,
Not dreaming of so dear a friend,
Deep in the abyss of Silver-End.*

* An obscure part of Olney, adjoining to the residence of Cowper, which faced the market-place.

Thus Martha, e'en against her will,
Perch'd on the top of yonder hill;
And you, though you must needs prefer
The fairest scenes of sweet Sancerre,*
Are come from distant Loire, to chuse
A cottage on the banks of Ouse.
This page of Providence, quite new,
And now just op'ning to our view,
Employs our present thoughts and pains
To guess, and spell, what it contains:
But day by day, and year by year,
Will make the dark ænigma clear;
And furnish us, perhaps, at last,
Like other scenes already past,
With proof, that we, and our affairs,
Are part of a Jehovah's cares:
For God unfolds, by slow degrees,
The purport of his deep decrees;
Sheds every hour a clearer light
In aid of our defective sight;
And spreads, at length, before the soul,
A beautiful and perfect whole,
Which busy man's inventive brain
Toils to anticipate, in vain.

Say, Anna, had you never known,
The beauties of a rose full blown,

* Lady Austen's residence in France.

Could you, tho' luminous your eye,
By looking on the bud, descry,
Or guess, with a prophetic power,
The future splendor of the flower?
Just so, th' Omnipotent, who turns
The system of a world's concerns,
From mere minutiæ, can educe
Events of most important use;
And bid a dawning sky display
The blaze of a meridian day.
The works of man, tend, one and all,
As needs they must, from great and small;
And vanity absorbs at length
The monuments of human strength:
But who can tell, how vast the plan,
Which this day's incident began?
Too small perhaps the slight occasion
For our dim-sighted observation;
It pass'd unnotic'd, as the bird
That cleaves the yielding air unheard,
And yet may prove, when understood
An harbinger of endless good.

Not that I deem, or mean to call
Friendship, a blessing cheap, or small:
But merely to remark, that ours,
Like some of nature's sweetest flowers,
Rose from a seed of tiny size,
That seem'd to promise no such prize:

A transient view intervening,
And made without a meaning,
(Hardly the effect of inclination,
Much less of pleasing expectation)
Produced a friendship, then begun,
That has cemented us in one;
And plac'd it in our power to prove,
By long esteem and love,
That Solomon was wisely spoken;
"A threefold cord is not soon broken."

In this interesting poem the author expresses a lively and devout presage of the superior productions, that were to arise in the process of time, from a friendship so unexpected, and so pleasing; but he does not seem to have been aware, in the slightest degree, of the evident dangers that must naturally attend an intimacy so very close, yet perfectly innocent, between a poet and two ladies, who, with very different mental powers, had each reason to flatter herself that she could agreeably promote the studies, and animate the fancy of this fascinating bard.

Genius of the most exquisite kind is sometimes, and perhaps generally, so modest, and diffident, as to require continual solicitation and encouragement, from the voice of sympathy, and friendship,

to lead it into permament and successful exertion. Such was the genius of Cowper; and he therefore considered the chearful and animating society of his new accomplished friend, as a blessing conferred on him by the signal favor of providence. I have reservéd the following letters, although of an earlier date than some of their predecessors, because they speak of Lady Austen, and could not therefore appear to advantage till the course of my narrative had rendered the reader acquainted with that interesting lady. In speaking of Cowper's first volume, and the circumstances of it's publication, I had occasion to proceed beyond the period when his friendship with Lady Austen commenced. In my first date of that very important event I have discovered and corrected, a little mistake which probably arose from a slight failure in the recollection of that lady, when she favored me with the particulars of her intercourse with the poet, whom she so happily inspired. Their acquaintance was said (in the first edition of this book) to have arisen in September 1781, but the following letters clearly prove that Cowper had been enlivened by the society of this animating friend, at an earlier period.

LETTER I.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 29, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Having given the case you laid before me in your last all due consideration, I proceed to answer it, and in order to clear my way, shall, in the first place, set down my sense of those passages of scripture, which, on a hasty perusal, seem to clash with the opinion I am going to give—"If a man smite one cheek, turn the other"—"If "he take thy cloak, let him take thy coat also."—That is, I suppose, rather than on a vindictive principle, avail yourself of that remedy the law allows you, in the way of retaliation, for that was the subject immediately under the discussion of the speaker. Nothing is so contrary to the genius of the Gospel, as the gratification of resentment and revenge, but I cannot easily persuade myself to think, that the Author of that dispensation could possibly advise his followers to consult their own peace at the expence of the peace of society, or inculcate an universal abstinence from the use of lawful remedies, to the encouragement of injury and oppression.

St. Paul again seems to condemn the practice of going to law, "Why do ye not rather suffer wrong. &c." but if we look again we shall find, that a litigious temper had obtained, and was prevalent among the professors of the day. This he condemned, and with good reason; it was unseemly to the last degree, that the disciples of the Prince of Peace should worry and vex each other with injurious treatment, and unnecessary disputes, to the scandal of their religion in the eyes of the Heathen. But surely he did not mean, any more than his Master, in the place above alluded to, that the most harmless members of society should receive no advantage of its laws, or should be the only persons in the world who should derive no benefit from those institutions, without which society cannot subsist. Neither of them could mean to throw down the pale of property, and to lay the Christian part of the world open, throughout all ages, to the incursions of unlimitted violence and wrong.

By this time you are sufficiently aware that I think you have an indisputable right to recover at law, what is so dishonestly withheld from you. The fellow, I suppose, has discernment enough to see a difference between you, and the generality of the

clergy, and cunning enough to conceive the purpose of turning your meekness and forbearance to good account, and of coining them into hard cash, which he means to put in his pocket.' But I would disappoint him, and shew him, that though a Christian is not to be quarrelsome, he is not to be crushed—and that, though he is but a worm before God, he is not such a worm, as every selfish unprincipled wretch may tread upon at his pleasure.

I lately heard a story from a lady, who spent many years of her life in France, somewhat to the present purpose. An Abbè, universally esteemed for his piety, and especially for the meekness of his manners, had yet undesignedly given some offence to a shabby fellow in his parish. The man, concluding he might do as he pleased with so forgiving and gentle a character, struck him on one cheek, and bade him turn the other. The good man did so, and when he had received the two slaps, which he thought himself obliged to submit to, turned again, and beat him soundly. I do not wish to see you follow the French gentleman's example, but I believe nobody, that has heard the story, condemns him much for the spirit he shewed upon the occasion.

I had the relation from Lady Austen, sister to Mrs. Jones, wife of the minister at Clifton. She is a most agreeable woman, and has fallen in love with your mother and me; insomuch, that I do not know but she may settle at Olney. Yesterday se'nnight we all dined together in the *Spinnie*—a most delightful retirement, belonging to Mrs. Throgmorton of Weston. Lady Austen's lacquey, and a lad that waits on me in the garden, drove a wheelbarrow-full of eatables and drinkables to the scene of our *Fête champêtre*. A board, laid over the top of the wheelbarrow, served us for a table; our dining-room was a root-house, lined with moss and ivy. At six o'clock, the servants, who had dined under the great elm upon the ground, at a little distance, boiled the kettle, and the said wheel-barrow served us for a tea-table. We then took a walk into the wilderness, about half a mile off, and were at home again a little after eight, having spent the day together from noon till evening, without one cross occurrence, or the least weariness of each other. An happiness few parties of pleasure can boast of.

Yours, with our joint love,

W. C.

LETTER II.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

August 25, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We rejoice with you sincerely in the birth of another son, and in the prospect you have of Mrs. Unwin's recovery; may your three children, and the next three, when they shall make their appearance, prove so many blessings to their parents, and make you wish that you had twice the number. But what made you expect daily that you should hear from me? Letter for letter is the law of all correspondence whatsoever, and because I wrote last, I have indulged myself for some time in expectation of a sheet from you.—Not that I govern myself entirely by the punctilio of reciprocation, but having been pretty much occupied of late, I was not sorry to find myself at liberty to exercise my discretion, and furnished with a good excuse if I chuse to be silent.

I expected, as you remember, to have been published last spring, and was disappointed. The delay has afforded me an opportunity to increase the quantity of my publication by about a third;

and if my muse has not forsaken me, which I rather suspect to be the case, may possibly yet add o it. I have a subject in hand, which promises me a great abundance of poetical matter, but which, for want of a something, I am not able to describe; I cannot at present proceed with. The name of it is "*Retirement*," and my purpose, to recommend the proper improvement of it, to set forth the requisites for that end, and to enlarge upon the happiness of that state of life, when managed as it ought to be. In the course of my journey through this ample theme, I should wish to touch upon the characters, the deficiencies, and the mistakes of thousands, who enter on a scene of retirement, unqualified for it in every respect, and with such designs as have no tendency to promote either their own happiness, or that of others. But as I have told you before, there are times when I am no more a poet than I am a mathematician, and when such a time occurs, I always think it better to give up the point, than to labour it in vain. I shall yet again be obliged to trouble you for franks. The addition of three thousand lines, or near that number, having occasioned a demand which I did not always foresee, but your obliging friend, and your obliging self, having al-

lowed me the liberty of application, I make it without apology.

The solitude, or rather the duality of our condition at Olney, seems drawing to a conclusion. You have not forgot, perhaps that the building we inhabit consists of two mansions. And because you have only seen the inside of that part of it which is in our occupation, I therefore inform you, that the other end of it is by far the most superb, as well as the most commodious. Lady Austen has seen it, has set her heart upon it, is going to fit it up and furnish it, and if she can get rid of the remaining two years of the lease of her London house, will probably enter upon it in a twelvemonth. You will be pleased with this intelligence, because I have already told you that she is a woman perfectly well-bred, sensible, and in every respect agreeable; and above all, because she loves your mother dearly. It has in my eyes (and I doubt not it will have the same in yours) strong marks of providential interposition. A female friend, and one who bids fair to prove herself worthy of the appellation, comes, recommended by a variety of considerations, to such a place as Olney. Since Mr. Newton went, and till this lady came, there was not in the kingdom a

retirement more absolutely such than ours. We did not want company, but when it came, we found it agreeable. A person that has seen much of the world, and understands it well, has high spirits, a lively fancy, and great readiness of conversation, introduces a sprightliness into such a scene as this, which if it was peaceful before, is not the worse for being a little enlivened. In case of illness too, to which all are liable, it was rather a gloomy prospect, if we allowed ourselves to advert to it, that there was hardly a woman in the place from whom it would have been reasonable to have expected either comfort or assistance. The present curate's wife is a valuable person, but has a family of her own, and though a neighbour, is not a very near one. But if this plan is effected, we shall be in a manner one family, and I suppose never pass a day without some intercourse with each other.

Your Mother sends her warm affections, and welcomes into the world the new-born William.

Yours,

My dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER III.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Feb. 9, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I thank you for Mr. Lowth's verses. They are so good, that had I been present when he spoke them, I should have trembled for the boy, lest the man should disappoint the hopes such early genius had given birth to. It is not common to see so lively a fancy so correctly managed, and so free from irregular exuberance; at so unexperienced an age, fruitful, yet not wanton, and gay without being taudry. When school-boys write verse, if they have any fire at all, it generally spends itself in flashes, and transient sparks, which may indeed suggest an expectation of something better hereafter, but deserve not to be much commended for any real merit of their own. Their wit is generally forced and false, and their sublimity, if they affect any, bombast. I remember well when it was thus with me, and when a turgid, noisy, unmeaning speech in a tragedy, which I should now laugh at, afforded me raptures, and filled me with wonder. It

is not in general, till reading and observation have settled the taste, that we can give the prize to the best writing, in preference to the worst. Much less are we able to execute what is good ourselves. But Lowth seems to have stepped into excellence at once, and to have gained by intuition, what we little folks are happy if we can learn at last, after much labour of our own, and instruction of others. The compliments he pays to the memory of King Charles, he would probably now retract, though he be a bishop, and his majesty's zeal for episcopacy was one of the causes of his ruin. An age or two must pass, before some characters can be properly understood. The spirit of party employs itself in veiling their faults, and ascribing to them virtues, which they never possessed. See Charles's face drawn by Clarendon, and it is a handsome portrait. See it more justly exhibited by Mrs. Macaulay, and it is deformed to a degree that shocks us. Every feature expresses cunning, employing itself in the maintaining of tyranny, and dissimulation, pretending itself an advocate for truth.

My letters have already apprised you of that close and intimate connexion that took place between the lady you visited in Queen Anne's street,

and us. Nothing could be more promising, though sudden in the commencement. She treated us with as much unreservedness of communication, as if we had been born in the same house, and educated together. At her departure, she herself proposed a correspondence, and because writing does not agree with your mother, proposed a correspondence with me. By her own desire I wrote to her under the assumed relation of a brother, and she to me as my sister.

I thank you for the search you have made after my intended motto, but I no longer need it.

Our love is always with yourself and family.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

Lady Austen returned in the following summer to the house of her sister, situated on the brow of a hill, the foot of which is washed by the river Ouse, as it flows between Clifton and Olney. Her benevolent ingenuity was exerted to guard the spirits of Cowper from sinking again into that hypochondriacal dejection, to which, even in her company, he still sometimes discovered an alarming

tendency. To promote his occupation and amusement, she furnished him with a small portable printing-press, and he gratefully sent her the following verses printed by himself, and enclosed in a billet, that alludes to the occasion, on which they were composed—a very unseasonable flood, that interrupted the communication between Clifton and Olney!

To watch the storms, and hear the sky
Give all our almanacs the lie;
To shake with cold, and see the plains
In autumn drown'd with wintry rains;
'Tis thus I spend my moments here,
And wish myself a Dutch mynheer;
I then should have no need of wit;
For lumpish Hollander unfit!
Nor should I then repine at mud,
Or meadows deluged with a flood;
But in a bog live well content,
And find it just my element;
Should be a clod, and not a man;
Nor wish in vain for Sister Ann,
With charitable aid to drag
My mind out of its proper quag
Should have the genius of a boor,
And no ambition to have more.

MY DEAR SISTER,

You see my beginning—I do not know, but in time, I may proceed even to the printing of halfpenny ballads—excuse the coarseness of my paper—I wasted such a quantity, before I could accomplish any thing legible, that I could not afford finer. I intend to employ an ingenious mechanic of the town to make me a longer case: for you may observe, that my lines turn up their tails like Dutch mastiffs, so difficult do I find it to make the two halves exactly coincide with each other.

We wait with impatience for the departure of this unseasonable flood. We think of you, and talk of you, but we can do no more, till the waters shall subside. I do not think our correspondence should drop because we are within a mile of each other. It is but an imaginary approximation, the flood having in reality as effectually parted us, as if the British Channel rolled between us.

Yours, my dear sister, with Mrs. Unwin's best love.

W. C.

August 12, 1782.

A flood that precluded him fro n the conversation of such an enlivening friend, was to Cowper a serious evil; but he was happily relieved from the apprehension of such disappointment in future, by seeing the friend so pleasing and so useful to him very comfortably settled, as his next door neighbour. An event so agreeable to the poet, was occasioned by circumstances of a painful nature, related in a letter to Mr. Unwin, which, though it bears no date of month or year, I am induced by these circumstances to introduce at present, though it was probably written after some of the subsequent letters.

LETTER IV.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

The modest terms in which you express yourself on the subject of Lady Austen's commendation, embolden me to add my suffrage to hers, and to confirm it by assuring you, that I think her just, and well founded in her opinion of you. The compliment indeed glances at myself; for were you less than she accounts you, I ought not to afford

you that place in my esteem, which you have held so long. My own sagacity therefore, and discernment, are not a little concerned upon the occasion, for either you resemble the picture, or I have strangely mistaken my man, and formed an erroneous judgment of his character. With respect to your face and figure indeed, there I leave the ladies to determine, as being naturally best qualified to decide the point; but whether you are perfectly the man of sense, and the gentleman, is a question, in which I am as much interested as they, and which, you being my friend, I am of course prepared to settle in your favor. The lady (whom, when you know her as well, you will love as much as we do) is, and has been, during the last fortnight, a part of our family. Before she was perfectly restored to health, she returned to Clifton. Soon after she came back, Mr. Jones had occasion to go to London. No sooner was he gone, than the *Chateau* being left without a garrison, was beseiged as regularly as the night came on. Villains were both heard and seen in the garden, and at the doors and windows. The kitchen window in particular was attempted, from which they took a complete pane of glass, exactly opposite to the iron by which it was

fastened, but providentially the window had been nailed to the wood-work, in order to keep it close, and that the air might be excluded; thus they were disappointed, and being discovered by the maid, withdrew. The ladies being worn out with continual watching, and repeated alarms, were at last prevailed upon to take refuge with us. Men, furnished with fire-arms, were put into the house, and the rascals having intelligence of this circumstance, beat a retreat. Mr. Jones returned; Mrs. Jones and Miss Green, her daughter, left us, but Lady Austen's spirits having been too much disturbed, to be able to repose in a place, where she had been so much terrified, she was left behind. She remains with us till her lodgings at the vicarage can be made ready for her reception. I have now sent you what has occurred of moment in our history since my last.

I say amen, with all my heart, to your observation on religious characters. Men who profess themselves adepts in mathematical knowledge, in astronomy, or jurisprudence, are generally as well qualified as they would appear. The reason may be, that they are always liable to detection, should they attempt to impose upon mankind, and therefore take care to be what they pretend. In religion alone, a

profession is often slightly taken up, and slovenly carried on, because forsooth, candour and charity require us to hope the best, and to judge favorably of our neighbour, and because it is easy to deceive the ignorant, who are a great majority, upon this subject. Let a man attach himself to a particular party, contend furiously for what are properly called evangelical doctrines, and enlist himself under the banner of some popular preacher, and the business is done. Behold a Christian! a Saint! a Phœnix!—In the mean time perhaps, his heart, and his temper, and even his conduct, are unsanctified; possibly less exemplary than those of some avowed infidels. No matter—he can talk—he has the Shibboleth of the true church—the bible in his pocket, and a head well stored with notions. But the quiet, humble, modest, and peaceable person, who is in his practice, what the other is only in his profession, who hates a noise, and therefore makes none, who knowing the snares, that are in the world, keeps himself as much out of it as he can, and never enters it, but when duty calls, and even then with fear and trembling—is the Christian, that will always stand highest in the estimation of those, who bring all characters to the test of true wisdom, and judge of the tree by its fruit.

You are desirous of visiting the prisoners; you wish to administer to their necessities, and to give them instruction. This task you will undertake, though you expect to encounter many things in the performance of it, that will give you pain. Now *this* I can understand—you will not listen to the sensibilities that distress yourself, but to the distresses of others. Therefore, when I meet with one of the specious praters above mentioned, I will send him to Stock, that by your diffidence, he may be taught a lesson of modesty; by your generosity, a little feeling for others, and by your general conduct, in short, to chatter less, and to do more.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER V.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

March 18, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Nothing has given me so much pleasure, since the publication of my volume, as your favorable opinion of it. It may possibly meet with acceptance from hundreds, whose commen-

dation would afford me no other satisfaction than what I should find in the hope that it might do them good. I have some neighbours in this place, who say they like it—doubtless I had rather they should than that they should not—but I know them to be persons of no more taste in poetry, than skill in the mathematics; their applause therefore is a sound that has no music in it for me. But my vanity was not so entirely quiescent when I read your friendly account of the manner it had affected *you*. It was tickled, and pleased, and told me in a pretty loud whisper, that others perhaps of whose taste and judgment I had an high opinion, would approve it too. As a giver of good counsel, I wish to please all—as an author, I am perfectly indifferent to the judgment of all, except the few who are indeed judicious. The circumstance however in your letter which pleased me most, was, that you wrote in high spirits, and though you said much, suppressed more, lest you should hurt my delicacy—my delicacy is obliged to you—but you observe it is not so squeamish, but that after it has feasted upon praise expressed, it can find a comfortable desert in the contemplation of praise implied. I now feel as if I should be glad to begin another volume, but from the will to the power is a step too wide

for me to take at present, and the season of the year brings with it so many avocations into the garden, where I am my own *fac totum*, that I have little or no leisure for the quill. I should do myself much wrong were I to omit mentioning the great complacency with which I read your narrative of Mrs. Unwin's smiles and tears; persons of much sensibility are always persons of taste, and a taste for poetry depends indeed upon that very article more than upon any other. If she had Aristotle by heart, I should not esteem her judgment so highly, were she defective in point of feeling, as I do, and must esteem it, knowing her to have such feelings as Aristotle could not communicate, and as half the readers in the world are destitute of. This it is that makes me set so high a price upon your Mother's opinion. She is a critic by nature, and not by rule, and has a perception of what is good or bad in composition, that I never knew deceive her, insomuch, that when two sorts of expression have pleaded equally for the precedence, in my own esteem, and I have referred, as in such cases I always did, the decision of the point to her, I never knew her at a loss for a just one.

Whether I shall receive any answer from his Chancellorship or not, is at present *in ambiguo*, and

will probably continue in the same state of ambiguity much longer. He is so busy a man, and at this time, if the papers may be credited, so particularly busy, that I am forced to mortify myself with the thought, that both my book, and my letter, may be thrown into a corner as too insignificant for a statesman's notice, and never found till his executor finds them. This affair, however, is neither at my *libitum* nor his. I have sent him the truth. He that put it into the heart of a certain eastern monarch, to amuse himself one sleepless night, with listening to the records of his kingdom, is able to give birth to such another occasion, and inspire his lordship with a curiosity to know, what he has received from a friend he once loved and valued. If an answer comes however, you shall not long be a stranger to the contents of it.

I have read your letter to their worships, and much approve of it. May it have the desired effect it ought! If not, still you have acted an humane and becoming part, and the poor aching toes and fingers of the prisoners, will not appear in judgment against you. I have made a slight alteration in the last sentence, which perhaps you will not disapprove.

W. C.

LETTER VI.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

April 1, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I could not have found a better trumpeter. Your zeal to serve the interest of my volume, together with your extensive acquaintance, qualify you perfectly for that most useful office. Methinks I see you with the long tube at your mouth, proclaiming to your numerous connexions, my poetical merits, and at proper intervals levelling it at Olney, and pouring into my ear, the welcome sound of their approbation. I need not encourage you to proceed, your breath will never fail in such a cause; and thus encouraged, I myself perhaps may proceed also, and when the versifying fit returns, produce another volume. Alas! we shall never receive such commendations from him on the woolsack, as your good friend has lavished upon us. Whence I learn, that however important I may be in my own eyes, I am very insignificant in his. To make me amends, however, for this mortification, Mr. Newton tells me, that my book is likely to run, spread, and prosper; that the grave cannot help

smiling, and the gay are struck with the truth of it; and that it is likely to find its way into his Majesty's hands, being put into a proper course for that purpose. Now if the King should fall in love with my muse, and with you for her sake, such an event would make us ample amends for the Chancellor's indifference, and you might be the first divine that ever reached a mitre, from the shoulders of a poet. But (I believe) we must be content, I with my gains, if I gain any thing, and you with the pleasure of knowing, that I am a gainer.

We laughed heartily at your answer to little John's question; and yet I think you might have given him a direct answer—"There are various "sorts of cleverness, my dear—I do not know "that mine lies in the poetical way, but I can do "ten times more towards the entertainment of com- "pany in the way of conversation, than our friend "at Olney. He can rhyme, and I can rattle. If he "had my talent, or I had his, we should be too "charming, and the world would almost adore us."

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER VII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

April 27, 1782.

My dear William, a part of Lord Harrington's new-raised corps, have taken up their quarters at Olney, since you left us. They have the regimental music with them. The men have been drawn up this morning, upon the Market-hill, and a concert, such as we have not heard these many years, has been performed at no great distance from our window. Your mother and I both thrust our heads into the coldest east-wind that ever blew in April, that we might hear them to greater advantage. The band acquitted themselves with taste and propriety, not *blairing*, like trumpeters at a fair, but producing gentle and elegant symphony, such as charmed our ears, and convinced us, that no length of time can wear out a taste for harmony, and that though plays, balls, and masquerades, have lost all their power to please us, and we should find them not only insipid but insupportable, yet sweet music is sure to find a corresponding faculty in the soul, a sensibility, that lives

to the last, which even religion itself does not extinguish.

When we objected to your coming for a single night, it was only in the way of argument, and in hopes to prevail on you to contrive a longer abode with us. But rather than not see you at all, we should be glad with you though but for an hour. If the paths should be clean enough, and we are able to walk (for you know we cannot ride) we will endeavour to meet you in Weston park. But I mention no particular hour, that I may not lay you under a supposed obligation to be punctual, which might be difficult at the end of so long a journey. Only if the weather be favorable, you shall find us there in the evening. It is winter in the south, perhaps therefore it may be spring at least, if not summer, in the north. For I have read that it is warmest in Greenland when it is coldest here. Be that as it may, we may hope at the latter end of such an April, that the first change of wind will improve the season.

The curate's simile Latinized——

Sors adversa gerit stimulum, sed tendit et alas:
Pungit, api similis, sed, velut ista, fugit.

What a dignity there is in the Roman language! and what an idea it gives us of the good sense, and masculine mind, of the people that spoke it! The same thought, which, clothed in English, seems childish, and even foolish, assumes a different air in Latin, and makes at least as good an epigram as some of Martial's.

I remember your making an observation, when here, on the subject of Parenthesis, to which I acceded without limitation; but a little attention will convince us both, that they are not to be universally condemned. When they abound, and when they are long, they both embarrass the sense, and are a proof that the writer's head is cloudy, that he has not properly arranged his matter; or is not well skilled in the graces of expression. But as parenthesis is ranked by grammarians among the figures of rhetoric, we may suppose they had a reason for conferring that honor upon it. Accordingly we shall find, that in the use of some of our finest writers, as well as in the hands of the antient poets and orators, it has a peculiar elegance, and imparts a beauty, which the period would want without it.

" Hoc nemus, hunc, inquit, frondoso vertice collem.
" (Quis deus incertum est) habitat deus."

Vir. Æn. 8.

In this instance, the first that occurred, it is graceful. I have not time to seek for more, nor room to insert them. But your own observation, I believe, will confirm my opinion.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER VIII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

May 27, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Rather ashamed of having been at all dejected by the censure of the Critical Reviewers, who certainly could not read without prejudice, a book replete with opinions and doctrines, to which they cannot subscribe, I have at present no little occasion to keep a strict guard upon my vanity lest it should be too much flattered by the following eulogium. I send it you for the

reasons I gave, when I imparted to you some other anecdotes of a similar kind, while we were together. Our interests in the success of this same volume are so closely united, that you *must* share with me in the praise or blame that attends it; and sympathizing with me under the burthen of injurious treatment, have a right to enjoy with me the cordials I now and then receive, as I happen to meet with more favorable and candid judges.

A merchant, a friend of ours, (you will soon guess him) sent my Poems to one of the first philosophers, one of the most eminent literary characters, as well as one of the most important in the political world, that the present age can boast of. Now perhaps your conjecturing faculties are puzzled, and you begin to ask "who, where, and what is he? "speak out, for I am all impatience." I will not say a word more, the letter in which he returned his thanks for the present, shall speak for him.*

We may now treat the critics as the archbishop of Toledo treated Gil Blas, when he found fault with one of his sermons.—His grace gave him a kick and

* Here Cowper transcribed the letter written from Passy, by the American Ambassador Franklin, in praise of his book.

said, " begone for a jackanapes, and furnish yourself with a better taste, if you know where to find it."

We are glad that you are safe at home again. Could we see at one glance of the eye, what is passing every day upon all the roads in the kingdom, how many are terrified and hurt, how many plundered and abused, we should indeed find reason enough to be thankful for journies performed in safety, and for deliverance from dangers, we are not perhaps even permitted to see. When in some of the high southern latitudes, and in a dark tempestuous night, a flash of lightning discovered to Captain Cook a vessel, which glanced along close by his side, and which but for the lightning, he must have run foul of, both the danger and the transient light that showed it, were undoubtedly designed to convey to him this wholesome instruction, that a particular Providence attended him, and that he was not only preserved from evils, of which he had notice, but from many more, of which he had no information, or even the least suspicion. What unlikely contingencies may nevertheless take place! How improbable that two ships should dash against each other, in the midst of the vast Pacific Ocean, and that steering contrary courses, from parts of the world so im-

mensely distant from each other, they should yet move so exactly in a line as to clash, fill, and go to the bottom, in a sea, where all the ships in the world might be so dispersed as that none should see another! Yet this must have happened but for the remarkable interference, which he has recorded. The same Providence, indeed, might as easily have conducted them so wide of each other that they should never have met at all, but then this lesson would have been lost; at least, the heroic voyager would have encompassed the globe without having had occasion to relate an incident, that so naturally suggests it.

I am no more delighted with the season than you are. The absence of the sun, which has graced the spring with much less of his presence, than he vouchsafed to the winter, has a very uncomfortable effect upon my frame, I feel an invincible aversion to employment, which I am yet constrained to fly to as my only remedy against something worse. If I do nothing I am dejected, if I do any thing I am weary, and that weariness is best described by the word lassitude, which of all wearinesses in the world is the most oppressive. But enough of myself and the weather.

The blow we have struck in the West Indies, will, I suppose, be decisive, at least for the present year, and so far as that part of our possessions is concerned in the present conflict. But the news-writers, and their correspondents, disgust me, and make me sick. One victory after such a long series of adverse occurrences, has filled them with self conceit, and impertinent boasting; and while Rodney is almost accounted a Methodist, for ascribing his success to Providence, men who have renounced all dependence upon such a friend, without whose assistance nothing can be done, threaten to drive the French out of the sea, laugh at the Spaniards, sneer at the Dutch, and are to carry the world before them. Our enemies are apt to brag, and we deride them for it; but we can sing as loud as they can, in the same key, and no doubt, wherever our prayers go, shall be derided in our turn. An Englishman's true glory should be, to do his business well, and say little about it; but he disgraces himself when he puffs his prowess as if he had finished his task, when he has but just begun it.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER IX.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

June 12, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Every extraordinary occurrence in our lives, affords us an opportunity to learn, if we will, something more of our own hearts, and tempers than we were before aware of. It is easy to promise ourselves before hand, that our conduct shall be wise or moderate, or resolute, on any given occasion. But when that occasion occurs, we do not always find it easy to make good the promise: such a difference there is between theory and practice. Perhaps this is no new remark, but it is not a whit the worse for being old, if it be true.

Before I had published, I said to myself—you and I, Mr. Cowper, will not concern ourselves much about what the critics may say of our book. But having once sent my wits for a venture, I soon became anxious about the issue, and found that I could not be satisfied with a warm place in my own good graces, unless my friends were pleased with me as much as I pleased myself. Meeting with their approbation, I began to feel the workings of ambition. It

is well, said I, that my friends are pleased; but friends are sometimes partial, and mine, I have reason to think, are not altogether free from bias. Methinks I should like to hear a stranger or two speak well of me. I was presently gratified by the approbation of the London Magazine, and the Gentleman's, particularly by that of the former, and by the plaudit of Dr. Franklin. By the way, magazines are publications we have but little respect for, 'till we ourselves are chronicled in them, and then they assume an importance in our esteem, which before we could not allow them. But the Monthly Review, the most formidable of all my judges is still behind. What will that critical Rhadamanthus say, when my shivering genius shall appear before him? Still he keeps me in hot water, and I must wait another month for his award. Alas! when I wish for a favorable sentence from that quarter (to confess a weakness, that I should not confess to all) I feel myself not a little influenced by a tender regard to my reputation here, even among my neighbours at Olney. Here are watch-makers, who themselves are wits, and who, at present perhaps, think me one. Here is a carpenter, and a baker, and not to mention others, here is your idol Mr.——, whose smile is fame. All

these read the Monthly Review, and all these will set me down for a dunce, if those terrible critics should show them the example. But Oh! wherever else I am accounted dull, dear Mr. Griffith, let me pass for a genius at Olney!

We are sorry for little William's illness. It is however the privilege of infancy to recover almost immediately, what it has lost by sickness. We are sorry too for Mr. ———'s dangerous condition. But he that is well prepared for the great journey, cannot enter on it too soon for himself, though his friends will weep at his departure.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER X.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 16, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Though some people pretend to be clever in the way of prophetical forecast, and to have a peculiar talent of sagacity, by which they can divine the meaning of a providential dispensa-

tion, while its consequences are yet in embryo—I do not. There is at this time to be found, I suppose, in the cabinet, and in both houses, a greater assemblage of able men, both as speakers and counsellors, than ever were cotemporary in the same land. A man, not accustomed to trace the workings of Providence, as recorded in scripture, and that has given no attention to this particular subject, while employed in the study of profane history, would assert boldly, that it is a token for good, that much may be expected from them, and that the country, though heavily afflicted, is not yet to be despaired of, distinguished as she is, by so many characters of the highest class. Thus he would say, and I do not deny, that the event might justify his skill in prognostics. God works by means, and in a case of great national perplexity and distress, wisdom and political ability, seem to be the only natural means of deliverance. But a mind more religiously inclined, and perhaps a little tinctured with melancholy, might with equal probability of success, hazard a conjecture directly opposite.—Alas! what is the wisdom of man, especially when he trusts in it as the only God of his confidence?—When I consider the general contempt that is poured upon all things sacred, the profusion,

the dissipation, the knavish cunning of some, the rapacity of others, and the impenitence of all, I am rather inclined to fear that God, who honors himself by bringing human glory to shame, and by disappointing the expectations of those, whose trust is in creatures, has signalized the present day as a day of much human sufficiency and strength, has brought together from all quarters of the land, the most illustrious men to be found in it, only that he may prove the vanity of idols, and that when a great empire is falling, and he has pronounced a sentence of ruin against it, the inhabitants, be they weak or strong, wise or foolish, must fall with it. I am rather confirmed in this persuasion, by observing that these luminaries of the state, had no sooner fixed themselves in the political heaven, than the fall of the brightest of them shook all the rest. The arch of their power was no sooner struck, than the key stone slipt out of its place, those that were closest in connexion, with it followed, and the whole building, new as it is, seems to be already a ruin.—If a man should hold this language, who could convict him of absurdity? The Marquis of Rockingham is minister——all the world rejoices, anticipating success in war, and a glorious peace.——The

Marquis of Rockingham is dead—all the world is afflicted, and relapses into its former despondence. —What does this prove, but that the Marquis was their Almighty, and that now he is gone, they know no other?—But let us wait a little, they will find another—Perhaps the Duke of Portland, or perhaps the unpopular———, whom they now represent as a devil, may obtain that honor. Thus God is forgot, and when he is, his judgments are generally his remembrancers.

How shall I comfort you upon the subject of your present distress? Pardon me that I find myself obliged to smile at it, because who but yourself would be distressed upon such an occasion? You have behaved politely, and like a gentleman, you have hospitably offered your house to a stranger who could not, in your neighbourhood at least, have been comfortably accommodated any where else. He, by neither refusing nor accepting an offer, that did him too much honor, has disgraced himself, but not you. I think for the future you must be more cautious of laying yourself open to a stranger, and never again expose yourself to incivilities from an archdeacon you are not acquainted with.

Though I did not mention it, I felt with you

what you suffered by the loss of Miss ——, I was only silent because I could minister no consolation to you on such a subject, but what I knew your mind to be already stored with. Indeed the application of comfort in such cases, is a nice business, and perhaps when best managed, might as well be let alone. I remember reading many years ago, a long treatise on the subject of consolation, written in French, the author's name I forgot, but I wrote these words in the margin.—Special consolation! at least for a Frenchman, who is a creature the most easily comforted of any in the world!

We are as happy in Lady Austen, and she in us, as ever—having a lively imagination, and being passionately desirous of consolidating all into one family (for she has taken her leave of London) she has just sprung a project which serves, at least, to amuse us, and to make us laugh—it is to hire Mr. Small's house, on the top of Clifton-hill, which is large, commodious, and handsome, will hold us conveniently, and any friends who may occasionally favor us with a visit—the house is furnished, but, if it can be hired without the furniture, will let for a trifle——your sentiments if you please upon this *demarche!*

I send you my last frank—our best love attends you individually, and altogether. I give you joy of a happy change in the season, and myself also. I have filled four sides in less time than two would have cost me a week ago—such is the effect of sunshine upon such a butterfly as I am.

Yours, W. C.

LETTER XI.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

August 3, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Entertaining some hope, that Mr. Newton's next letter would furnish me with the means of satisfying your enquiry on the subject of Doctor Johnson's opinion, I have till now delayed my answer to your last; but the information is not yet come, Mr. Newton having intermitted a week more than usual, since his last writing. When I receive it, favorable or not, it shall be communicated to you; but I am not over sanguine in my expectations from that quarter. Very learned, and very critical heads, are hard to please. He may perhaps treat

me with lenity for the sake of the subject and design, but the composition, I think, will hardly escape his censure. But though all doctors may not be of the same mind, there is one doctor at least, whom I have lately discovered, my professed admirer. He too, like Johnson, was with difficulty persuaded to read, having an aversion to all poetry, except the Night-Thoughts, which on a certain occasion, when being confined on board a ship, he had no other employment, he got by heart. He was however prevailed upon, and read me several times over, so that if my volume had sailed with him, instead of Doctor Young's, I perhaps might have occupied that shelf in his memory, which he then allotted to the Doctor.

It is a sort of parodox, but it is true: we are never more in danger than when we think ourselves most secure, nor in reality more secure, than when we seem to be most in danger. Both sides of this apparent contradiction were lately verified in my experience—passing from the green-house to the barn, I saw three kittens (for we have so many in our retinue) looking with fixt attention on something, which lay on the threshold of a door nailed up. I took but little notice of them at first, but a loud hiss engaged me to attend more closely, when behold—

a viper! the largest that I remember to have seen rearing itself, darting its forked tongue, and ejaculating the aforesaid hiss at the nose of a kitten, almost in contact with his lips. I ran into the hall for a hoe with a long handle, with which I intended to assail him, and returning in a few seconds missed him: he was gone, and I feared had escaped me. Still however the kitten sat watching immoveably on the same spot. I concluded therefore, that sliding between the door and the threshold, he had found his way out of the garden into the yard.——I went round immediately, and there found him in close conversation with the old cat, whose curiosity being excited by so novel an appearance, inclined her to pat his head repeatedly with her fore foot, with her claws however sheathed, and not in anger, but in the way of philosophic enquiry and examination. To prevent her falling a victim to so laudable an exercise of her talents, I interposed in a moment with the hoe, and performed upon him an act of decapitation, which though not immediately mortal, proved so in the end. Had he slid into the passages, where it is dark, or had he, when in the yard, met with no interruption from the cat, and secreted himself in any of the out-houses, it is hardly possible but that some of the

family must have been bitten; he might have been trodden upon without being perceived, and have slipped away before the sufferer could have distinguished what foe had wounded him. Three years ago we discovered one in the same place, which the barber slew with a trowel.

Our proposed removal to Mr. Small's, was, as you may suppose, a jest, or rather a joco-serious matter. We never looked upon it as entirely feasible, yet we saw in it something so like practicability that we did not esteem it altogether unworthy of our attention. It was one of those projects, which people of lively imaginations play with, and admire for a few days, and then break in pieces. Lady Austen returned on Thursday from London, where she spent the last fortnight, and whither she was called by an unexpected opportunity to dispose of the remainder of her lease. She has therefore no longer any connexion with the great city, and no house but at Olney. Her abode is to be at the vicarage, where she has hired as much room as she wants, which she will embellish with her own furniture and which she will occupy as soon as the minister's wife has produced another child, which is expected to make its entry in October.

Mr. Bull, a dissenting minister of Newport, a learned, ingenious, good-natured, pious friend of ours, who sometimes visits us, and whom we visited last week, has put into my hands three volumes of French poetry, composed by Madame Guion—a quietist, say you, and a fanatic, I will have nothing to do with her——'Tis very well, you are welcome to have nothing to do with her, but in the mean time her verse is the only French verse I ever read that I found agreeable; there is a neatness in it equal to that which we applaud, with so much reason, in the compositions of Prior. I have translated several of them, and shall proceed in my translations, till I have filled a Lilliputian paper-book I happen to have by me, which when filled, I shall present to Mr. Bull. He is her passionate admirer; rode twenty miles to see her picture in the house of a stranger, which stranger politely insisted on his acceptance of it, and it now hangs over his chimney. It is a striking portrait, too characteristic not to be a strong resemblance, and, were it encompassed with a glory, instead of being dressed in a nun's hood, might pass for the face of an angel.

Yours,

W. C.

To this letter I am just enabled to annex, a very lively *lusus poeticus* from the pen of Cowper, on the same subject, kindly imparted to me by Mr. Courtenay of Weston.

THE

COLUBRIAD.

Close by the threshold of a door nail'd fast
Three kittens sat; each kitten look'd aghast.
I passing swift, and inattentive by,
At the three kittens cast a careless eye;
Not much concern'd to know what they did there,
Not deeming kittens worth a poet's care.
But presently a loud and furious hiss
Caus'd me to stop, and to exclaim "what's this?"
When lo! upon the threshold met my view,
With head erect, and eyes of fiery hue,
A viper, long as Count de Grasse's queue.
Forth from his head his forked tongue he throws,
Darting it full against a kitten's nose;
Who having never seen, in field or house,
The like, sat still and silent as a mouse:
Only projecting, with attention due,
Her whisker'd face, she ask'd him, "who are you?"
On to the hall went I, with pace not slow,
But swift as lightning, for a long Dutch hoe:

With which well arm'd I hasten'd to the spot,
To find the viper, but I found him not.
And, turning up the leaves and shrubs around,
Found only, that he was not to be found.
But still the kittens sitting as before,
Sat watching close the bottom of the door.
" I hope," said I, " the villain I would kill,
" Has slipt between the door, and the door's sill;
" And if I make dispatch, and follow hard,
" No doubt but I shall find him in the yard :"
For long ere now it should have been rehears'd,
'Twas in the garden that I found him first.
Ev'n there I found him, there the full-grown cat
His head, with velvet paw, did gently pat;
As curious as the kittens erst had been
To learn what this phenomenon might mean.
Fill'd with heroic ardour at the sight,
And fearing every moment he would bite,
And rob our houshold of our only cat,
That was of age to combat with a rat;
With out-stretch'd hoe I slew him at the door,
And taught him NEVER TO COME THERE NO MORE.

Lady Austen became a tenant of the parsonage in Olney——when Mr. Newton occupied that parsonage, he had opened a door in the garden-wall, that admitted him in the most commodious manner, to visit the sequestered poet, who resided in the next house. Lady Austen had the advantage of this easy intercourse, and so captivating was her society, both to Cowper, and to Mrs. Unwin, that these intimate neighbours might be almost said to make one family, as it became their custom to dine always together, alternately in the houses of the two ladies.

The musical talents of Lady Austen induced Cowper to write a few songs of peculiar sweetness and pathos, to suit particular airs that she was accustomed to play on the harpsichord. I insert three of these as proofs, that even in his hours of social amusement, the poet loved to dwell on ideas of tender devotion, and pathetic solemnity.

SONG.

Written in the Summer of 1783; at the request of

LADY AUSTEN.

Air.—"My fond shepherds of late, &c."

No longer I follow a sound;
No longer a dream I pursue:
O happiness! not to be found,
Unattainable treasure adieu!

I have sought thee in splendour and dress,
In the regions of pleasure and taste;
I have sought thee, and seem'd to possess,
But have prov'd thee a vision at last.

An humble ambition and hope
The voice of true wisdom inspires;
'Tis sufficient, if peace be the scope,
And the summit of all our desires.

Peace may be the lot of the mind,
That seeks it in meekness and love;
But rapture and bliss are confined
To the glorified spirits above!

SONG.

Air.—" The Lass of Pattie's Mill."

When all within is peace,
How nature seems to smile!
Delights that never cease,
The live-long day beguile.
From morn to dewy eve,
With open hand she showers
Fresh blessings to deceive,
And soothe the silent hours.

It is content of heart
Gives nature power to please;
The mind that feels no smart,
Enlivens all it sees;
Can make a wintry sky
Seem bright as smiling May,
And evening's closing eye
As peep of early day.

The vast majestic globe
So beauteously array'd,
In nature's various robe,
With wond'rous skill display'd,
Is to a mourner's heart
A dreary wild at best;
It flutters to depart,
And longs to be at rest.

I add the following Song (adapted to the march in Scippio) for two reasons; because it is pleasing to promote the celebrity of a brave man, calamitously cut off in his career of honor, and because the Song was a favorite production of the poet's; so much so, that he amused himself by translating it into Latin verse. I take the version from one of his subsequent letters, for the sake of annexing it to the original.

SONG.

ON THE LOSS OF THE ROYAL GEORGE.

Toll for the brave!
The brave that are no more!
All sunk beneath the wave,
Fast by their native shore!

Eight hundred of the brave,
Whose courage well was tried,
Had made the vessel heel,
And laid her on her side.

A land breeze shook the shrouds,
And she was over-set;
Down went the Royal George,
With all her crew complete.

Toll for the brave!
Brave Kempenfelt is gone;
His last sea-fight is fought;
His work of glory done.

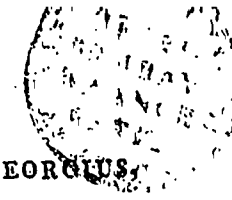
It was not in the battle;
No tempest gave the shock;
She sprang no fatal leak;
She ran upon no rock.

His sword was in its sheath;
His fingers held the pen,
When Kempenfelt went down,
With twice four hundred men.

Weigh the vessel up,
Once dreaded by our foes!
And mingle with our cup,
The tear that England owes.

Her timbers yet are sound,
And she may float again,
Full-charg'd with England's thunder,
And plough the distant main.

But Kempenfelt is gone,
His victories are o'er;
And he and his eight hundred,
Shall plough the wave no more.



IN SUBMERSIONEM NAVIGII, CUI GEORGIUS, REGALE NOMEN, INDITUM.

Plangimus fortes. Periere fortes,
Patrium propter periere littus
Bis quatèr centum; subitò sub alto
Æquore mersi.

Navis, innitens lateri, jacebat,
Malus ad summas trepidabat undas,
Cùm levis, funes quaticns, ad imum
Depulit aura.

Plangimus fortes. Nimis, heu, caducam
Fortibus vitam voluere parcæ,
Nec sinunt ultrà tibi nos recentes
Nectere laurus.

Magne, qui nomen, licèt incanorum,
Traditum ex multis atavis tulisti!
At tuos olim memorabit ævum
Omne triumphos.

Non hyems illos furibunda mersit,
Non mari in clauso scopuli latentes,
Fissa non rimis abies, nec atrox
Abstulit ensis.

Navitæ sed tum nimium joeosi
Voce fallebant hilari laborem,
Et quiescebat, calamoque dextram impleverat heros.

Vos, quibus cordi est grave opus piumque,
Humidum ex alto spolium levate,
Et putrescentes sub aquis amicos
Reddite amicis!

Hi quidem (sic diis placuit) fuere:
Sed ratis, nondùm putris, ire possit
Rursùs in bellum, Britonumque nomen
Tollere ad astra.

Let the reader, who wishes to impress on his mind a just idea of the variety and extent of Cowper's poetical powers, contrast this heroic ballad, of exquisite pathos, with his diverting history of John Gilpin!

That admirable, and highly popular piece of pleasantry was composed at the period of which I am now speaking. An elegant and judicious writer, who has recently favored the public with three interesting volumes relating to the early poets of our country, conjectures, that a poem, written by the

celebrated Sir Thomas More in his youth, (the merry jest of the Serjeant and Frere) may have suggested to Cowper his tale of John Gilpin; but that fascinating ballad had a different origin; and it is a very remarkable fact, that full of gaiety and humour as this favorite of the public has abundantly proved itself to be, it was really composed at a time, when the spirit of the poet, as he informed me himself, was very deeply tinged with his depressive malady. It happened one afternoon, in those years when his accomplished friend Lady Austen made a part of his little evening circle, that she observed him sinking into increasing dejection; it was her custom, on these occasions, to try all the resources of her sprightly powers for his immediate relief. She told him the story of John Gilpin (which had been treasured in her memory from her childhood) to dissipate the gloom of the passing hour. Its effect on the fancy of Cowper had the air of enchantment: he informed her the next morning, that convulsions of laughter, brought on by his recollection of her story, had kept him waking during the greatest part of the night, and that he had turned it into a ballad.—So arose the pleasant poem of John Gilpin: It was eagerly copied, and finding its way rapidly to the newspa-

pers, it was seized by the lively spirit of Henderson, the comedian, a man, like the Yorick described by Shakespeare, "of infinite jest, and most excellent fancy," it was seized by Henderson as a proper subject for the display of his own comic powers; and by reciting it in his public readings, he gave uncommon celebrity to the ballad, before the public suspected to what poet they were indebted for the sudden burst of ludicrous amusement. Many readers were astonished when the poem made its first authentic appearance in the second volume of Cowper.

A pleasing proof of the medicinal effect that this sportive ballad continued to produce on the spirits of its author, appears in the next letter.

LETTER XII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Nov. 4, 1782.

My dear friend, you are too modest; though your last consisted of three sides only, I am certainly a letter in your debt. It is possible, that this present writing may prove as short. Yet, short as it may be, it will be a letter, and make me credi-

tor, and you my debtor. A letter indeed ought not to be estimated by the length of it, but by the contents, and how can the contents of any letter be more agreeable than your last?

You tell me that John Gilpin made you laugh tears, and that the ladies at court are delighted with my Poems. Much good may they do them! May they become as wise as the writer wishes them, and they will be much happier than he! I know there is in the book that wisdom which cometh from above, because it was from above that I received it. May they receive it too! For whether they drink it out of the cistern, or whether it falls upon them immediately from the clouds, as it did on me, it is all one. It is the water of life, which whosoever drinketh shall thirst no more. As to the famous horseman above-mentioned, he and his feats are an inexhaustible source of merriment. At least we find him so, and seldom meet without refreshing ourselves with the recollection of them. You are perfectly at liberty to deal with them as you please. *Auctore tantùm anonymo imprimantur;* and when printed, send me a copy.

I congratulate you on the discharge of your duty, and your conscience, by the pains you have

taken for the relief of the prisoners. You proceeded wisely, yet courageously, and deserved better success. Your labours, however, will be remembered elsewhere, when you shall be forgotten here; and if the poor folks at Chelmsford should never receive the benefit of them, you will yourself receive it in Heaven. It is pity that men of fortune should be determined to acts of beneficence sometimes by popular whim, or prejudice, and sometimes by motives still more unworthy. The liberal subscription, raised in behalf of the widows of the seamen lost in the Royal George, was an instance of the former. At least a plain, short, and sensible letter in the news-paper, convinced me at the time, that it was an unnecessary and injudicious collection: and the difficulty you found in effectuating your benevolent intentions on this occasion, constrains me to think that had it been an affair of more notoriety, than merely to furnish a few poor fellows with a little fuel to preserve their extremities from the frost, you would have succeeded better. Men really pious, delight in doing good by stealth. But nothing less than an ostentatious display of bounty, will satisfy mankind in general. I feel myself disposed to furnish you with an opportunity to shine in secret.

We do what we can. But that *can* is little. You have rich friends, are eloquent on all occasions, and know how to be pathetic on a proper one. The winter will be severely felt at Olney by many, whose sobriety, industry, and honesty, recommend them to charitable notice: and we think we could tell such persons as Mr. ———, or Mr. ———, half a dozen tales of distress, that would find their way into hearts as feeling as theirs. You will do, as you see good; and we in the mean time shall remain convinced, that you will do your best. Lady Austen will no doubt do something. For she has great sensibility and compassion.

Yours my dear Unwin,

W. C.

LETTER XIII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Nov. 18, 1782.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

On the part of the poor, and on our part, be pleased to make acknowledgments, such as the occasion calls for, to our beneficent friend Mr.——. I call him ours, because having

experienced his kindness to myself, in a former instance, and in the present, his disinterested readiness to succour the distressed, my ambition will be satisfied with nothing less. He may depend upon the strictest secrecy; no creature shall hear him mentioned, either now or hereafter, as the person from whom we have received this bounty. But when I speak of him, or hear him spoken of by others, which sometimes happens, I shall not forget what is due to so rare a character. I wish and your Mother wishes it too, that he could sometimes take us in his way to ——; he will find us happy to receive a person whom we must needs account it an honor to know. We shall exercise our best discretion in the disposal of the money; but in this town, where the gospel has been preached so many years, where the people have been favoured so long with laborious and conscientious ministers, it is not an easy thing to find those who make no profession of religion at all, and are yet proper objects of charity. The profane, are so profane, so drunken, dissolute, and in every respect worthless, that to make them partakers of his bounty, would be to abuse it. We promise however that none shall touch it, but such as are miserably poor, yet at the same time industrious and

honest, two characters frequently united here, where the most watchful and unremitting labour will hardly procure them bread. We make none but the cheapest laces, and the price of them is fallen almost to nothing. Thanks are due to yourself likewise, and are hereby accordingly rendered, for waving your claim in behalf of your own parishioners. You are always with them, and they are always, at least some of them, the better for your residence among them. Olney is a populous place, inhabited chiefly by the half-starved and the ragged of the earth, and it is not possible for our small party and small ability, to extend their operations so far as to be much felt among such numbers. Accept therefore your share of their gratitude, and be convinced, that when they pray for a blessing upon those who relieved their wants, He that answers that prayer, and when he answers it, will remember his servant at Stock.

I little thought when I was writing the history of John Gilpin, that he would appear in print—I intended to laugh, and to make two or three others laugh, of whom you were one. But now all the world laugh, at least if they have the same relish for a tale ridiculous in itself, and quaintly told, as we have—Well—they do not always laugh so innocently, and

at so small an expence——for in a world like this abounding with subjects for satire, and with satirical wits to mark them, a laugh that hurts nobody, has at least the grace of novelty to recommend it. Swift's darling motto was, *Vive la bagatelle*—a good wish for a philosopher of his complexion, the greater part of whose wisdom, whencesoever it came, most certainly came not from above. *La bagatelle* has no enemy in me, though it has neither so warm a friend, nor so able a one, as it had in him. If I trifle, and merely trifle, it is because I am reduced to it by necessity—a melancholy that nothing else so effectually disperses, engages me sometimes in the arduous task of being merry by force. And strange as it may seem the most ludicrous lines I ever wrote, have been written in the saddest mood, and but for that saddest mood, perhaps had never been written at all.

I hear from Mrs. Newton, that some great persons have spoken with great approbation of a certain book—Who they are, and what they have said, I am to be told in a future letter. The Monthly Reviewers in the mean time have satisfied me well enough.

Yours, my dear William,

W. C.

LETTER XIV.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

My dear William, Doctor Beattie is a respectable character. I account him a man of sense, a philosopher, a scholar, a person of distinguished genius, and a good writer. I believe him too a Christian; with a profound reverence for the scripture, with great zeal and ability to enforce the belief of it, (both which he exerts with the candour and good-manners of a gentleman) he seems well entitled to that allowance; and to deny it him, would impeach one's right to the appellation. With all these good things to recommend him, there can be no dearth of sufficient reasons to read his writings. You favored me some years since, with one of his volumes; by which I was both pleased and instructed: and I beg that you will send me the new one, when you can conveniently spare it, or rather bring it yourself, while the swallows are yet upon the wing; for the summer is going down apace.

You tell me you have been asked, if I am intent upon another volume? I reply—not at pre-

sent, not being convinced that I have met with sufficient encouragement. I account myself happy in having pleased a few, but am not rich enough to despise the many. I do not know what sort of market my commodity has found, but if a slack one, I must beware how I make a second attempt. My bookseller will not be willing to incur a certain loss; and I can as little afford it. Notwithstanding what I have said, I write, and am even now writing, for the press. I told you that I had translated several of the poems of Madame Guion. I told you too, or I am mistaken, that Mr. Bull designed to print them. That gentleman is gone to the sea-side with Mrs. Wilberforce, and will be absent six weeks. My intention is to surprize him at his return with the addition of as much more translation as I have already given him. This however is still less likely to be a popular work than my former. Men, that have no religion, would despise it; and men, that have no religious experience, would not understand it. But the strain of simple and unaffected piety in the original, is sweet beyond expression. She sings like an angel, and for that very reason has found but few admirers. Other things I write too,

as you will see on the other side, but these merely for my amusement.*

W. C.

LETTER XV.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Jan. 19, 1783.

My dear William, not to retaliate, but for want of opportunity, I have delayed writing. From a scene of most uninterrupted retirement, we have passed at once into a state of constant engagement; not that our society is much multiplied. The addition of an individual has made all this difference. Lady Austen and we pass our days alternately at each other's *chateau*. In the morning I walk with one or other of the ladies, and in the afternoon wind thread. Thus did Hercules and Sampson, and thus do I; and were both those heroes living, I should not fear to challenge them to a trial of skill

* This letter closed with the English and Latin Verses on the loss of the Royal George, inserted before.

in that business, or doubt to beat them both. As to killing lions, and other amusements of that kind, with which they were so delighted, I should be their humble servant, and beg to be excused.

Having no franks, I cannot send you Mr. ——'s two letters as I intended. We corresponded as long as the occasion required, and then ceased. Charmed with his good sense, politeness, and liberality to the poor, I was indeed ambitious of continuing a correspondence with him, and told him so. Perhaps I had done more prudently had I never proposed it. But warm hearts are not famous for wisdom, and mine was too warm to be very considerate on such an occasion. I have not heard from him since, and have long given up all expectation of it. I know he is too busy a man to have leisure for me, and I ought to have recollected it sooner. He found time to do much good, and to employ us, as his agents, in doing it, and that might have satisfied me. Though laid under the strictest injunctions of secrecy, both by him, and by you on his behalf, I consider myself as under no obligation to conceal from you the remittances he made. Only, in my turn, I beg leave to request secrecy on your part, because, intimate as you are with him, and highly as he values you, I

cannot yet be sure that the communication would please him, his delicacies on this subject being as singular as his benevolence. He sent forty pounds, twenty at a time. Olney has not had such a friend as this many a day; nor has there been an instance, at any time, of a few families so effectually relieved, or so completely encouraged to the pursuit of that honest industry, by which their debts being paid, and the parents and children comfortably clothed, they are now enabled to maintain themselves. Their labour was almost in vain before; but now it answers; it earns them bread, and all their other wants are plentifully supplied.

I wish, that by Mr. ——'s assistance, your purpose in behalf of the prisoners may be effectuated. A pen, so formidable as his, might do much good, if properly directed. The dread of a bold censure is ten times more moving than the most eloquent persuasion. They that cannot feel for others, are the persons of all the world, who feel most sensibly for themselves.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER XVI.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

Feb. 8, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

When I contemplate the nations of the earth, and their conduct towards each other, through the medium of a scriptural light, my opinions of them are exactly like your own. Whether they do good or do evil, I see them acting under the permission or direction of that Providence who governs the earth, whose operations are as irresistible, as they are silent and unsuspected. So far we are perfectly agreed, and howsoever we may differ upon inferior parts of the subject, it is, as you say, an affair of no great consequence. For instance, you think the peace a better than we deserve, and in a certain sense I agree with you: as a sinful nation we deserve no peace at all, and have reason enough to be thankful that the voice of war is at any rate put to silence.

Mr. S——'s last child is dead; it lived a little while in a world of which it knew nothing, and is gone to another in which it is already become wiser than the wisest it has left behind. The earth is a

grain of sand, but the interests of man are commensurate with the heavens.

Mrs. Unwin thanks Mrs. Newton for her kind letter, and for executing her commissions. We truly love you both, and think of you often.

W. C.

LETTER XVII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

Feb. 13, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

In writing to you I never want a subject. Self is always at hand, and self, with its concerns, is always interesting to a friend.

You may think perhaps, that having commenced poet by profession, I am always writing verses. Not so—I have written nothing, at least finished nothing, since I published—except a certain facetious history of John Gilpin, which Mrs. Unwin would send to the Public Advertiser. Perhaps you might read it without suspecting the author.

My book procures me favors, which my modesty

will not permit me to specify, except one, which, modest as I am, I cannot suppress--a very handsome letter from Dr. Franklin at Passy. These fruits it has brought me.

I have been refreshing myself with a walk in the garden, where I find that January (who according to Chaucer was the husband of May) being dead, February has married the widow.

Yours, &c.

W. C.

LETTER XVIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq

Olney, Feb. 20, 1783.

Suspecting that I should not have hinted at Dr. Franklin's encomium under any other influence than that of vanity, I was several times on the point of burning my letter for that very reason. But not having time to write another by the same post, and believing that you would have the grace to pardon a little self-complacency in an au-

thor on so trying an occasion, I let it pass. One sin naturally leads to another, and a greater; and thus it happens now, for I have no way to gratify your curiosity, but by transcribing the letter in question. It is addressed, by the way, not to me, but an acquaintance of mine, who had transmitted the volume to him without my knowledge.

Passy, May 8, 1782.

" *SIR.*

I received the letter you did me the honor of writing to me, and am much obliged by your kind present of a book. The relish for reading of poetry had long since left me, but there is something so new in the manner, so easy, and yet so correct in the language, so clear in the expression, yet concise, and so just in the sentiments, that I have read the whole with great pleasure, and some of the pieces more than once. I beg you to accept my thankful acknowledgements, and to present my respects to the author.

Your most obedient humble servant,

B. Franklin."

LETTER XIX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Great revolutions happen in this Ant's nest of ours. One Emmet of illustrious character, and great abilities, pushes out another; parties are formed, they range themselves in formidable opposition, they threaten each other's ruin, they cross over and are mingled together, and like the coruscations of the Northern Aurora amuse the spectator, at the same time that by some they are supposed to be forerunners of a general dissolution.

There are political earthquakes as well as natural ones, the former less shocking to the eye, but not always less fatal in their influence than the latter. The image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream was made up of heterogeneous and incompatible materials, and accordingly broken. Whatever is so formed must expect a like catastrophe.

I have an etching of the late Chancellor hanging over the parlour chimney. I often contemplate it, and call to mind the day when I was intimate with the original. It is very like him, but he is

disguised by his hat, which, though fashionable, is awkward; by his great wig, the tie of which is hardly discernible in profile, and by his band and gown, which give him an appearance clumsily sacerdotal. Our friendship is dead and buried, yours is the only surviving one of all, with which I was once honored.

Adieu,

W. C.

LETTER XX.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

April 5, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

When one has a letter to write, there is nothing more useful than to make a beginning. In the first place, because unless it be begun, there is no good reason to hope it will ever be ended; and secondly, because the beginning is half the business, it being much more difficult to put the pen in motion at first, than to continue the progress of it, when once moved.

Mrs. C——'s illnes, likely to prove mortal, and seizing her at such a time, has excited much compassion in my breast, and in Mrs. Unwin's, both for her and her daughter. To have parted with a child she loves so much, intending soon to follow her; to find herself arrested before she could set out, and at so great a distance from her most valued relations, her daughter's life too threatened by a disorder not often curable, are circumstances truly affecting. She has indeed much natural fortitude, and to make her condition still more tolerable, a good Christian hope for her support. But so it is, that the distresses of those who least need our pity, excite it most; the amiableness of the character engages our sympathy, and we mourn for persons for whom perhaps we might more reasonably rejoice. There is still however a possibility that she may recover; an event we *must* wish for, though for her to depart would be far better. Thus we would always withhold from the skies those who alone can reach them, at least till we are ready to bear them company.

Present our love, if you please, to Miss C——. I saw in the Gentleman's Magazine for last month, an account of a physician, who has discovered a new method of treating consumptive cases, which has

succeeded wonderfully in the trial. He finds the seat of the distemper in the stomach, and cures it principally by emetics. The old method of encountering the disorder has proved so unequal to the task, that I should be much inclined to any new practice that comes well recommended. He is spoken of as a sensible and judicious man, but his name I have forgot.

Our love to all under your roof, and in particular to Miss Catlett, if she is with you.

Yours my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER XXI.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

May 5, 1783.

You may suppose that I did not hear Mr. —— preach, but I heard of him. How different is that plainness of speech which a spiritual theme requires, from that vulgar dialect which this gentleman has mistaken for it! Affectation of every sort is odious, especially in a minister, and more especially an affectation that betrays

him into expressions fit only for the mouths of the illiterate. Truth indeed needs no ornament, neither does a beautiful person; but to clothe it therefore in rags, when a decent habit was at hand, would be esteemed preposterous and absurd. The best proportioned figure may be made offensive by beggary and filth, and even truths, which came down from Heaven, though they cannot forego their nature, may be disguised and disgraced by unsuitable language. It is strange that a pupil of yours should blunder thus. You may be consoled however by reflecting, that he could not have erred so grossly if he had not totally and wilfully departed both from your instruction and example. Were I to describe your stile in two words, I should call it plain and neat, *simplicem munditiis*, and I do not know how I could give it juster praise, or pay it a greater compliment. He that speaks to be understood by a congregation of rustics, and yet in terms that would not offend academical ears, has found the happy medium. This is certainly practicable to men of taste and judgment, and the practice of a few proves it. *Hactenus de Concionando.*

We are truly glad to hear that Miss C—— is better, and heartily wish you more promising ac-

counts from Scotland. *Debemur morti nos nostraque.* We all acknowledge the debt, but are seldom pleased when those we love are required to pay it. The demand will find you prepared for it.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER XXII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

May 12, 1783.

My dear friend, a letter written from such a place as this is a creation; and creation is a work for which mere mortal man is very indifferently qualified. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*, is a maxim that applies itself in every case, where deity is not concerned. With this view of the matter, I should charge myself with extreme folly for pretending to work without materials, did I not know, that although nothing could be the result, even that nothing will be welcome. If I can tell you no

news, I can tell you at least, that I esteem you highly; that my friendship with you and yours, is the only balm of my life; a comfort, sufficient to reconcile me to an existence destitute of every other. This is not the language of to-day, only the effect of a transient cloud suddenly brought over me, and suddenly to be removed, but punctually expressive of my habitual frame of mind, such as it has been these ten years.

In the review of last month, I met with an account of a sermon preached by Mr. Paley, at the consecration of his friend, Bishop Law. The critic admires and extols the preacher, and devoutly prays the lord of the harvest to send forth more such labourers into his vineyard. I rather differ from him in opinion, not being able to conjecture in what respect the vineyard will be benefited by such a measure. He is certainly ingenious, and has stretched his ingenuity to the uttermost, in order to exhibit the church established, consisting of bishops, priests, and deacons, in the most favorable point of view. I lay it down for a rule, that when much ingenuity is necessary to gain an argument credit, that argument is unsound at bottom. So is his, and so are all the petty devices by which he seeks to enforce

it. He says first, "that the appointment of various orders in the church is attended with this good consequence, that each class of people is supplied with a clergy of their own level and description, with whom they may live and associate on terms of equality." But in order to effect this good purpose, there ought to be at least three parsons in every parish, one for the gentry, one for traders and mechanics, and one for the lowest of the vulgar. Neither is it easy to find many parishes, where the laity at large have any society with their minister at all. This therefore is fanciful, and a mere invention: in the next place he says it gives a dignity to the ministry itself, and the clergy share in the respect paid to their superiors. Much good may such participation do them! They themselves know how little it amounts to. The dignity a parson derives from the lawn sleeves, and square cap of his diocesan, will never endanger his humility.

Pope says truly——

> Worth makes the man, and want of it the fellow,
> The rest is all but leather or prunella.

Again—"Rich and splendid situations in the church have been justly regarded as prizes, held out

to invite persons of good hopes, and ingenuous attainments." Agreed. But the prize held out in the Scripture, is of a very different kind: and our ecclesiastical baits are too often snapped by the worthless, and persons of no attainments at all. They are indeed incentives to avarice and ambition, but not to those acquirements, by which only the ministerial function can be adorned—zeal for the salvation of men, humility, and self-denial. Mr. Paley and I therefore cannot agree.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER XXIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

May 26, 1783.

I feel for my Uncle, and do not wonder that his loss afflicts him. A connexion that has subsisted so many years could not be rent asunder without great pain to the survivor. I hope, however, and doubt not but when he has had a lit-

tle more time for recollection, he will find that consolation in his own family, which is not the lot of every father to be blessed with. It seldom happens that married persons live together so long, or so happily; but this which one feels oneself ready to suggest as matter of alleviation, is the very circumstance that aggravates his distress; therefore he misses her the more, and feels that he can but ill spare her. It is however a necessary tax, which all who live long must pay for their longevity, to lose many whom they would be glad to detain, (perhaps those in whom all their happiness is centered) and to see them step into the grave before them. In one respect at least, this is a merciful appointment: when life has lost that to which it owed its principal relish, we may ourselves the more cheerfully resign it. I beg you would present him with my most affectionate remembrance, and tell him, if you think fit, how much I wish that the evening of his long day may be serene and happy.

W. C.

LETTER XXIV.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

May 31, 1783.

We rather rejoice than mourn with you on the occasion of Mrs. C———'s death. In the case of believers, death has lost his sting, not only with respect to those he takes away, but with respect to survivors also. Nature indeed, will always suggest some causes of sorrow, when an amiable and Christian friend departs, but the scripture, so many more, and so much more important reasons to rejoice, that on such occasions, perhaps more remarkably than on any other, sorrow is turned into joy. The law of our land, is affronted if we say the king dies, and insists on it that he only demises. This, which is a fiction, where a monarch only is in question, in the case of a Christian, is reality and truth. He only lays aside a body, which it is his privilege to be incumbered with no longer; and instead of dying, in that moment he begins to live. But this the world does not understand, therefore the kings will it must go on demising to the end of the chapter.

W. C.

LETTER XXV.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

June 8, 1783.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Our severest winter, commonly called the spring, is now over, and I find myself seated in my favorite recess, the green-house. In such a situation, so silent, so shady, where no human foot is heard, and where only my myrtles presume to peep in at the window, you may suppose I have no interruption to complain of, and that my thoughts are perfectly at my command. But the beauties of the spot are themselves an interruption, my attention being called upon by those very myrtles, by a double row of grass pinks just beginning to blossom, and by a bed of beans already in bloom; and you are to consider it, if you please, as no small proof of my regard, that though you have so many powerful rivals, I disengage myself from them all, and devote this hour entirely to you.

You are not acquainted with the Rev. Mr. Bull of Newport, perhaps it is as well for you that you are not. You would regret still more than you do,

that there are so many miles interposed between us. He spends part of the day with us to-morrow. A dissenter, but a liberal one; a man of letters and of genius; master of a fine imagination, or rather not master of it; an imagination, which, when he finds himself in the company he loves, and can confide in, runs away with him into such fields of speculation, as amuse and enliven every other imagination that has the happiness to be of the party! at other times he has a tender and delicate sort of melancholy in his disposition, not less agreeable in its way. No men are better qualified for companions in such a world as this, than men of such a temperament. Every scene of life has two sides, a dark and a bright one, and the mind that has an equal mixture of melancholy and vivacity, is best of all qualified for the contemplation of either. He can be lively without levity, and pensive without dejection. Such a man is Mr. Bull. But—he smokes tobacco—nothing is perfect——

Nihil est ab omni
Parte beatum

On the other side I send you a something, a

song if you please composed last Thursday——the incident happened the day before,*

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER XXVI.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

June 13, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I thank you for your Dutch communications. The suffrage of such respectable men must have given you much pleasure, a pleasure only to be exceeded by the consciousness you had before of having published truth, and of having served a good master by doing so.

I have always regretted that your ecclesiastical history went no further; I never saw a work that I thought more likely to serve the cause of truth, nor history applied to so good a purpose. The facts incontestible, the grand observations upon them all

* Here followed his song of the Rose.

irrefragable, and the stile, in my judgment, incomprably better than that of Robertson or Gibbon. I would give you my reasons for thinking so, if I had not a very urgent one for declining it. You have no ear for such music, whoever may be the performer. What you added, but never printed, is quite equal to what has appeared, which I think might have encouraged you to proceed, though you missed that freedom in writing, which you found before. While you were at Olney this was at least possible in a state of retirement you had leisure, without which I suppose Paul himself could not have written his Epistles. But those days are fled, and every hope of a continuation is fled with them,

The day of Judgment is spoken of not only as a surprise, but a snare—a snare upon all the inhabitants of the earth. A difference indeed will obtain in favor of the godly, which is, that though a snare, a sudden, in some sense an unexpected, and in every sense, an awful event, yet it will find *them* prepared to meet it. But the day being thus characterized, a wide field is consequently open to conjecture, some will look for it at one period, and some at another; we shall most of us prove at last to have been mistaken, and if any should prove to have guessed aright, they

will reap no advantage, the felicity of their conjecture being incapable of proof, till the day itself shall prove it. My own sentiments upon the subject appear to me perfectly scriptural, though I have no doubt that they differ totally from those of all who have ever thought about it, being however so singular, and of importance to the happiness of mankind, and being moreover difficult to swallow, just in proportion as they are peculiar, I keep them to myself.

I am, and always have been, a great observer of natural appearances, but I think not a superstitious one. The fallibility of those speculations, which lead men of fanciful minds to interpret scripture by the contingencies of the day, is evident from this consideration, that what the God of the scriptures has seen fit to conceal, he will not, as the God of nature, publish. He is one and the same in both capacities, and consistent with himself, and his purpose, if he designs a secret, impenetrable, in whatever way we attempt to open it. It is impossible however for an observer of natural phænomena, not to be struck with the singularity of the present season. The fogs I mentioned in my last, still continue, though till yesterday the earth was as dry as intense heat could make it. The sun continues to rise and set

without his rays, and hardly shines at noon, even in a cloudless day. At eleven last night the moon was a dull red, she was nearly at her highest elevation, and had the colour of heated brick. She would naturally, I know, have such an appearance looking through a misty atmosphere, but that such an atmosphere should obtain for so long a time, in a country where it has not happened in my remembrance, even in the winter, is rather remarkable. We have had more thunder storms than have consisted well with the peace of the fearful maidens in Olney, though not so many as have happened in places at no great distance, nor so violent. Yesterday morning however, at seven o'clock, two fireballs burst either in the steeple or close to it. William Andrews saw them meet at that point, and immediately after saw such a smoke issue from the apertures in the steeple, as soon rendered it invisible: the noise of the explosion surpassed all the noises I ever heard—you would have thought that a thousand sledge-hammers were battering great stones to powder, all in the same instant. The weather is still as hot, and the air as full of vapour, as if there had been neither rain nor thunder all the summer.

There was once a periodical paper published, called Mist's Journal. A name well adapted to the sheet before you. Misty however as I am, I do not mean to be mystical, but to be understood, like an almanack-maker, according to the letter. As a poet nevertheless, I claim, if any wonderful event should follow, a right to apply all and every such post-prognostic, to the purposes of the tragic muse.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER XXVII.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

June 17, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your letter reached Mr. S—— while Mr. —— was with him; whether it wrought any change in *his* opinion of that gentleman, as a preacher, I know not, but for my own part I give you full credit for the soundness and rectitude of *yours*. No man was ever scolded out of his sins. The heart, corrupt as it is, and because it is so,

grows angry if it be not treated with some management, and good manners, and scolds again. A surly mastiff will bear perhaps to be stroked, though he will growl even under that operation, but if you touch him roughly, he will bite, There is no grace that the spirit of self can counterfeit with more success than a religious zeal. A man thinks he is fighting for Christ, and he is fighting for his own notions. He thinks that he is skilfully searching the hearts of others. when he is only gratifying the malignity of his own, and charitably supposes his hearers destitute of all grace, that he may shine the more in his own eyes by comparison. When he has performed this notable task, he wonders that they are not converted, "he has given it them "soundly, and if they do not tremble, and confess, "that God is in him of a truth, he gives them up "as reprobate, incorrigible, and lost for ever." But a man that loves me, if he sees me in an error, will pity me, and endeavour calmly to convince me of it, and persuade me to forsake it. If he has great and good news to tell me, he will not do it angrily, and in much heat and discomposure of spirit. It is not therefore easy to conceive on what ground a minister can justify a conduct, which only proves

that he does not understand his errand. The absurdity of it would certainly strike him if he were not himself deluded.

A people will always love a minister, if a minister seems to love his people. The old maxim, *Simile agit in simile*, is in no case more exactly verified: therefore you were beloved at Olney, and if you preached to the Chickesaws, and Chachtaws, would be equally beloved by them.

W. C.

LETTER XXVIII.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

June 19, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The translation of your letter into *Dutch*, was news that pleased me *much*. I intended plain prose, but a rhyme obtruded itself, and I became poetical when I least expected it. When you wrote those letters you did not dream that you were designed for an apostle to the Dutch. Yet so it proves, and such among many others are the advantages we derive from the art of printing. An art

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in which indisputably man was instructed by the same great teacher, who taught him to embroider for the service of the sanctuary, and which amounts almost to as great a blessing as the gift of tongues.

The summer is passing away, and hitherto has hardly been either seen or felt. Perpetual clouds intercept the influence of the sun, and for the most part there is an autumnal coldness in the weather, though we are almost upon the eve of the longest day.

We are well, and always mindful of you, be mindful of us, and assured that we love you.

Yours my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER XXIX.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

July 27, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You cannot have more pleasure in receiving a letter from me, than I should find in writing it, were it not almost impossible in such a place to find a subject.

I live in a world abounding with incidents, upon which many grave, and perhaps some profitable observations might be made; but those incidents never reaching my unfortunate ears, both the entertaining narrative, and the reflection it might suggest, are to me annihilated and lost. I look back to the past week, and say, what did it produce? I ask the same question of the week preceding, and duly receive the same answer from both—nothing! —A situation like this, in which I am as unknown to the world, as I am ignorant of all that passes in it, in which I have nothing to do but to think, would exactly suit me, were my subjects of meditation as agreeable as my leisure is uninterrupted, my passion for retirement is not at all abated, after so many years spent in the most sequestered state, but rather increased. A circumstance, I should esteem wonderful to a degree not to be accounted for, considering the condition of my mind, did I not know that we think as we are made to think, and of course approve and prefer, as Providence, who appoints the bounds of our habitation, chuses for us. Thus I am both free and a prisoner at the same time. The world is before me; I am not shut up in the Bastile; there are no moats about my castle, no locks upon my

gates, of which I have not the key—but an invisible, uncontroulable agency, a local attachment, an inclination more forcible than I ever felt, even to the place of my birth, serves me for prison walls, and for bounds which I cannot pass. In former years I have known sorrow, and before I had ever tasted of spiritual trouble. The effect was an abhorrence of the scene in which I had suffered so much, and a weariness of those objects which I had so long looked at with an eye of despondency and dejection. But it is otherwise with me now. The same cause subsisting, and in a much more powerful degree, fails to produce its natural effect. The very stones in the garden-walls are my intimate acquaintance. I should miss almost the minutest object, and be disagreeably affected by its removal, and am persuaded, that were it possible I could leave this incommodious nook for a twelvemonth, I should return to it again with rapture, and be transported with the sight of objects, which to all the world beside, would be at least indifferent; some of them perhaps, such as the ragged thatch, and the tottering walls of the neighbouring cottages, disgusting. 'But so it is, and it is so, because here is to be my abode, and because such is the appointment of *Him* that placed me in it.'

Iste terrarum mihi præter omnes
Angulus ridet.

It is the place of all the world I love the most, not for any happiness it affords me, but because here I can be miserable with most convenience to myself, and with the least disturbance to others,

You wonder, and (I dare say) unfeignedly, because you do not think yourself entitled to such praise, that I prefer your style, as an historian, to that of the two most renowned writers of history the present day has seen. That you may not suspect me of having said more than my real opinion will warrant, I will tell you why. In your style I see no affectation. In every line of theirs I see nothing else. They disgust me always, Robertson with his pomp and his strut, and Gibbon with his finical and French manners. You are as correct as they. You express yourself with as much precision. Your words are ranged with as much propriety, but you do not set your periods to a tune. They discover a perpetual desire to exhibit themselves to advantage, whereas your subject engrosses you. They sing, and you say; which, as history is a thing to be said, and not sung, is, in my judgment very much to your advantage. A writer

that despises their tricks, and s yet neither inelegant nor inharmonious, proves him self, by that single circumstance, a man of superio judgment and ability to them both. You have my reasons. I honor a manly character, in which good sen e, and a desire of doing good, are the predominan features—but affectation is an emetic.

W. C.

LETTER XXX.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

August 4, 1783.

My dear William, I feel myself sensibly obliged by the interest you take in the success of my productions. Your feelings upon the subject, are such as I should have myself, had I an opportunity of calling Johnson aside to make the enquiry you propose. But I am pretty well prepared for the worst, and so long as I have the opinion of a few capable judges in my favor and am thereby convinced that I have neither disgraced myself nor my

subject, shall not feel myself disposed to any extreme anxiety about the sale. To aim, with success at the spiritual good of mankind, and to become popular by writing on scriptural subjects, were an unreasonable ambition, even for a poet to entertain in days like these. Verse may have many charms, but has none powerful enough to conquer the aversion of a dissipated age to such instruction. Ask the question therefore boldly and be not mortified even though he should shake his head, and drop his chin; for it is no more than we have reason to expect. We will lay the fault upon the vice of the times, and we will acquit the poet.

I am glad you were pleased with my Latin ode, and indeed with my English dirge as much as I was myself. The tune laid me under a disadvantage, obliging me to write in Alexandrines; which, I suppose, would suit no ear, but a French one; neither did I intend any thing more than that the subject, and the words should be sufficiently accommodated to the music. The ballad is a species of poetry, I believe peculiar to this country, equally adapted to the drollest, and the most tragical subjects. Simplicity and ease are its proper characteristics. Our forefa-

thers excelled in it; but we moderns, have lost the art. It is observed, that we have few good English odes. But to make amends, we have many excellent ballads, not inferior perhaps in true poetical merit to some of the very best odes, that the Greek or Latin languages have to boast of. It is a sort of composition I was ever fond of, and if graver matters had not called me another way, should have addicted myself to it more than to any other. I inherit a taste for it from my father, who succeeded well in it himself, and who lived at a time when the best pieces in that way were produced. What can be prettier than Gay's ballad or rather Swift's Arbuthnot's Pope's and Gay's, in the What do ye call it—"Twas when the seas were roaring." I have been well informed, that they all contributed, and that the most celebrated association of clever fellows, this country ever saw, did not think it beneath them to unite their strength and abilities in the composition of a song. The success however answered their wishes. The ballads that Bourne has translated, beautiful in themselves, are still more beautiful in his version of them, infinitely surpassing in my judgment, all that Ovid or Tibullus have left behind them. They are quite as elegant, and far more

touching and pathetic, than the tenderest strokes of either.

So much for ballads, and ballad writers.—"A "worthy subject," you will say, "for a man, whose "head might be filled with better things:"—and it is filled with better things, but to so ill a purpose that I thrust into it all manner of topics, that may prove more amusing; as for instance, I have two goldfinches, which in the summer occupy the green house. A few days since, being employed in cleaning out their cages, I placed that which I had in hand upon the table, while the other hung against the wall: the windows and the doors stood wide open. I went to fill the fountain at the pump and on my return, was not a little surprised to find a goldfinch sitting on the top of the cage I had been cleaning and singing to, and kissing the goldfinch within. I approached him; and he discovered no fear; still nearer, and he discovered none. I advanced my hand towards him, and he took no notice of it. I seized him, and supposed I had caught a new bird, but casting my eye upon the other cage perceived my mistake. Its inhabitant, during my absence, had contrived to find an opening, where the wire had been a little bent, and made no other

use of the escape it afforded him, than to salute his friend, and to converse with him more intimately than he had done before. I returned him to his proper mansion, but in vain. In less than a minute he had thrust his little person through the aperture again, and again perched upon his neighbour's cage, kissing him, as at the first, and singing, as if transported with the fortunate adventure. I could not but respect such friendship, as for the sake of its gratification, had twice declined an opportunity to be free, and, consenting to their union, resolved, that for the future, one cage should hold them both. I am glad of such incidents. For at a pinch, and when I need entertainment, the versification of them serves to divert me.

I transcribe for you a piece of Madam Guion, not as the best, but as being shorter than many, and as good as most of them.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER XXXI.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Sept. 7, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

So long a silence needs an apology. I have been hindered by a three-weeks visit from our Hoxton friends, and by a cold, and feverish complaint, which are but just removed.

The French poetess is certainly chargeable with the fault you mention, though I thought it not so glaring in the piece I sent you. I have endeavoured indeed, in all the translations I have made, to cure her of that evil, either by the suppression of passages exceptionable upon that account, or by a more sober and respectful manner of expression. Still however she will be found to have conversed familiarly with God, but I hope not fulsomely, nor so as to give reasonable disgust to a religious reader. That God should deal familiarly with man, or which is the same thing, that he should permit man to deal familiarly with him, seems not very difficult to conceive, or presumptuous to suppose, when some things are taken into consideration. Woe to the sinner, that

shall dare to take a liberty with him that is not warranted by his word, or to which he himself has not encouraged him. When he assumed man's nature, he revealed himself as the friend of man, as the brother, of every soul that loves him. He conversed freely with man while he was on earth, and as freely with him after his resurrection I doubt not therefore that it is possible to enjoy an access to him even now unincumbered with ceremonious awe, easy, delightful, and without constraint. This however, can only be the lot of those who make it the business of their lives to please him, and to cultivate communion with him. And then I presume there can be no danger of offence, because such a habit of the soul is of his own creation, and near as we come, we come no nearer to him than he is pleased to draw us. If we address him as children, it is because he tells us he is our father. If we unbosom ourselves to him as to a friend it is because he calls us friends, and if we speak to him in the language of love, it is because he first used it, thereby teaching us that it is the language, he delights to hear from his people. But I confess, that through the weakness, the folly, and corruption of human nature, this privilege, like all other Christian privileges, is liable to abuse. There is a mixture of

evil in every thing we do, indulgence encourages us to encroach, and while we exercise the rights of children, we become childish. Here I think is the point in which my authoress failed, and here it is that I have particularly guarded my translation, not afraid of representing her as dealing with God familiarly, but foolishly, irreverently, and without due attention to his majesty, of which she is somewhat guilty. A wonderful fault for such a woman to fall into, who spent her life in the contemplation of his glory, who seems to have been always impressed with a sense of it, and sometimes quite absorbed by the views she had of it.

W. C.

LETTER XXXII.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

Sept. 8, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Mrs. Unwin would have answered your kind note from Bedford, had not a pain in her side prevented her. I, who am her secretary upon such occasions, should certainly have answered

it for her, but was hindered by illness, having been myself seized with a fever immediately after your departure. The account of your recovery gave us great pleasure, and I am persuaded that you will feel yourself repaid by the information that I give you of mine. The reveries your head was filled with, while your disorder was most prevalent, though they were but reveries, and the offspring of a heated imagination, afforded you yet a comfortable evidence of the predominant bias of your heart and mind, to the best subjects. I had none such—indeed I was in no degree delirious, nor has any thing less than a fever really dangerous, ever made me so. In this respect, if in no other, I may be said to have a strong head, and perhaps for the same reason that wine would never make me drunk, an ordinary degree of fever has no effect upon my understanding. The epidemic begins to be more mortal as the autumn comes on, and in Bedfordshire, it is reported, how truly I cannot say, to be nearly as fatal as the plague. I heard lately of a clerk in a public office, whose chief employment it was for many years to administer oaths, who being light-headed in a fever, of which he died, spent the last week of his life, in crying day and night—"So help you God—kiss the

book—give me a shilling." What a wretch in comparison with you!

Mr. S—— has been ill almost ever since you left us, and last Saturday, as on many foregoing Saturdays, was obliged to clap on a blister by way of preparation for his Sunday labours. He cannot draw breath upon any other terms. If holy orders were always conferred upon such conditions, I question but even bishopricks themselves would want an occupant. But he is easy and cheerful.

I beg you will mention me kindly to Mr. Bacon, and make him sensible that if I did not write the paragraph he wished for, it was not owing to any want of respect for the desire he expressed, but to mere inability. If in a state of mind that almost disqualifies me for society, I could possibly wish to form a new connexion, I should wish to know him; but I never shall, and things being as they are, I do not regret it. You are my old friend, therefore I do not spare you; having known you in better days, I make you pay for any pleasure I might then afford you, by a communication of my present pains. But I have no claims of this sort upon Mr. Bacon.

Be pleased to remember us both, with much affection, to Mrs. Newton, and to her and your Eliza

—to Miss C—— likewise, if she is with you. Poor Eliza droops and languishes, but in the land to which she is going, she will hold up her head, and droop no more. A sickness that leads the way to everlasting life, is better than the health of an antediluvian. Accept our united love.

My dear friend,

Sincerely yours,

W. C.

LETTER XXXIII.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

Sept. 23, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We are glad that having been attacked by a fever, which has often proved fatal, and almost always leaves the sufferer debilitated to the last degree, you find yourself so soon restored to health, and your strength recovered. *Your* health and strength are useful to others, and in that view, important in *his* account who dispenses both, and by your means a more precious gift than either. For my own part, though I have not been laid up

I have never been perfectly well since you left us. A smart fever, which lasted indeed but a few hours, succeeded by lassitude and want of spirits, that seemed still to indicate a feverish habit, has made for some time, and still makes me very unfit for my favorite occupations, writing and reading——so that even a letter, and even a letter to you, is not without its burthen.

John —— has had the epidemic, and has it still, but grows better. When he was first seized with it, he gave notice that he should die, but in this only instance of prophetic exertion, he seems to have been mistaken: he has however been very near it. I should have told you, that poor John has been very ready to depart, and much comforted through his whole illness. He, you know, though a silent, has been a very steady professor. He indeed fights battles, and gains victories, but makes no noise. Europe is not astonished at his feats, foreign academies do not seek him for a member; he will never discover the art of flying, or send a globe of taffata up to Heaven. But he will go thither himself.

Since you went, we dined with Mr. ——, I had sent him notice of our visit a week before,

which like a contemplative, studious man, as he is, he put in his pocket and forgot. When we arrived, the parlour windows were shut, and the house had the appearance of being uninhabited. After waiting some time however, the maid opened the door, and the master presented himself. It is hardly worth while to observe so repeatedly, that his garden seems a spot contrived only for the growth of melancholy, but being always affected by it, in the same way, I cannot help it. He shewed me a nook, in which he had placed a bench, and where he said he found it very refreshing to smoke his pipe and meditate. Here he sits, with his back against one brick-wall, and his nose against another, which must, you know, be very refreshing, and greatly assist meditation. He rejoices the more in this niche, because it is an acquisition made at some expence, and with no small labour; several loads of earth were removed in order to make it, which loads of earth, had I the management of them, I should carry thither again, and fill up a place more fit in appearance to be a repository for the dead than the living. I would on no account, put any man out of conceit with his innocent enjoyments, and therefore never tell him my thoughts upon this subject, but he is not seldom

low-spirited, and I cannot but suspect that his situation helps to make him so.

I shall be obliged to you for Hawkesworth's voyages; when it can be sent conveniently. The long evenings are beginning, and nothing shortens them so effectually as reading aloud.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER XXXIV.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Sept. 29, 1783.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

We are sorry that you and your houshold partake so largely of the ill effects of this unhealthy season. You are happy however in having hitherto escaped the epidemic fever, which has prevailed much in this part of the kingdom, and carried many off. Your mother and I are well. After more than a fortnight's indisposition, which slight appellation is quite adequate to the description of all I suffered, I am at length restored by a grain or

two of emetic Tartar. It is a tax I generally pay in autumn. By this time, I hope, a purer ether than we have seen for months, and those brighter suns than the summer had to boast, have cheered your spirits, and made your existence more comfortable. We are rational. But we are animal too, and therefore subject to the influences of the weather. The cattle in the fields show evident symptoms of lassitude and disgust, in an unpleasant season; and we, their lords and masters are constrained to sympathize with them: the only difference between us is, that they know not the cause of their dejection, and we do, but, for our humiliation, are equally at a loss to cure it. Upon this account I have sometimes wished myself a philosopher. How happy, in comparison with myself, does the sagacious investigator of nature seem, whose fancy is ever employed in the invention of *hypotheses*, and his reason in the support of them! While he is accounting for the origin of the winds, he has no leisure to attend to their influence upon himself—and, while he considers what the sun is made of, forgets that he has not shone for a month. One project indeed supplants another. The *vortices* of Descartes, gave way to the gravitation of Newton, and this again is

threatened by the electrical fluid of a modern. One generation blows bubbles, and the next breaks them. But in the mean time your philospher is a happy man. He escapes a thousand inquietudes, to which the indolent are subject, and finds his occupation, whether it be the pursuit of a butterfly, or a demonstration, the wholesomest exercise in the world. As he proceeds, he applauds himself. His discoveries, though eventfully perhaps they prove but dreams, are to him realities. The world gaze at him, as he does at new phænomena in the heavens, and perhaps understand him as little. But this does not prevent their praises, nor at all disturb him in the enjoyment of that self-complacence to which his imaginary success entitles him. He wears his honors while he lives, and if another strips them off when he has been dead a century, it is no great matter; he can then make shift without them.

I have said a great deal upon this subject, and know not what it all amounts to. I did not intend a syllable of it when I began. But *currente calamo*, I stumbled upon it. My end is to amuse myself and you. The former of these two points is secured. I shall be happy if I do not miss the latter.

By the way, what is your opinion of these air-balloons? I am quite charmed with the discovery. Is it not possible (do you suppose ?) to convey such a quantity of inflammable air into the stomach, and abdomen, that the philosopher, no longer gravitating to a centre, shall ascend by his own comparative levity, and never stop 'till he has reached the medium, exactly *in equilibrio* with himself? May he not by the help of a pasteboard rudder, attached to his posteriors, steer himself in that purer element with ease, and again by a slow and gradual discharge of his aerial contents, recover his former tendency to the earth, and descend without the smallest danger or inconvenience? These things are worth enquiry, and (I dare say) they will be enquired after as they deserve: The *pennæ non homini datæ*, are likely to be less regretted than they were; and perhaps a flight of academicians, and a covey of fine ladies, may be no uncommon spectacle in the next generation. A letter which appeared in the public prints last week, convinces me that the learned are not without hopes of some such improvement upon this discovery. The author is a sensible and ingenious man, and under a reasonable apprehension that the ignorant may feel themselves

inclined to laugh upon a subject, that affects himself with the utmost seriousness, with much good manners, and management, bespeaks their patience suggesting many good consequences, that may result from a course of experiments upon this machine, and amongst others, that it may be of use in ascertaining the shape of continents and islands, and the face of wide-extended and far distant countries, an end not to be hoped for, unless by these means of extraordinary elevation, the human prospect may be immensely enlarged, and the philosopher, exalted to the skies, attain a view of the whole hemisphere at once. But whether he is to ascend by the mere inflation of his person, as hinted above, or whether in a sort of band-box, supported upon balloons is not yet apparent, nor (I suppose) even in his own idea perfectly decided.

Yours,

My dear William,

W. C.

LETTER XXXV.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

Oct. 6, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It is indeed a melancholy consideration, that the gospel, whose direct tendency is to promote the happiness of mankind in the present, as well as in the life to come, and which so effectually answers the design of its author, whenever it is well understood and sincerely believed, should through the ignorance, the bigotry, the superstition of its professors, and the ambition of popes, and princes, the tools of popes, have produced incidently so much mischief; only furnishing the world with a plausible excuse to worry each other, while they sanctified the worst cause with the specious pretext of zeal, for the furtherance of the best.

Angels descend from heaven to publish peace between man and his Maker—the Prince of Peace himself comes to confirm and establish it, and war, hatred, and desolation are the consequence. Thousands quarrel about the interpretation of a book, which none of them understand. He that is slain, dies firmly persuaded that the crown of martyrdom expects him, and he that slew him, is equally con-

vinced that he has done God service. In reality, they are both mistaken, and equally unentitled to the honor they arrogate to themselves. If a multitude of blind men should set out for a certain city, and dispute about the right road till a battle ensued between them, the probable effect would be that none of them would ever reach it; and such a fray, preposterous and shocking in the extreme, would exhibit a picture in some degree resembling the original of which we have been speaking. And why is not the world thus occupied at present? even because they have exchanged a zeal that was no better than madness, for an indifference equally pitiable and absurd. The holy sepulchre has lost its importance in the eyes of nations, called Christian, not because the light of true wisdom has delivered them from a superstitious attachment to the spot, but because he that was buried in it is no longer regarded by them as the Saviour of the world. The exercise of reason, enlightened by philosophy, has cured them indeed of the misery of an abused understanding, but together with the delusion they have lost the substance, and for the sake of the lies that were grafted upon it, have quarrelled with the truth itself. Here then we see the *ne plus ultrá* of human wisdom, at least in affairs of

religion. It enlightens the mind with respect to non-essentials, but with respect to that in which the essence of Christianity consists, leaves it perfectly in the dark. It can discover many errors that in different ages have disgraced the faith, but it is only to make way for the admission of one more fatal than them all, which represents that faith itself as a delusion. Why those evils have been permitted shall be known hereafter. One thing in the mean time is certain; that the folly and frenzy of the professed disciples of the gospel, have been more dangerous to its interests, than all the avowed hostilities of its adversaries, and perhaps for this cause, these mischiefs might be suffered to prevail for a season, that its divine original and nature, might be the more illustrated, when it should appear that it was able to stand its ground for ages against that most formidable of all attacks, the indiscretion of its friends. The outrages that have followed this perversion of the truth, have proved indeed a stumbling-block to individuals; the wise of this world, with all their wisdom, have not been able to distinguish between the blessing and abuse of it. Voltaire was offended, and Gibbon has turned his back, but the flock of Christ is still nourished, and still increases, notwithstanding the

unbelief of a philosopher is able to convert bread into a stone, and a fish into a serpent.

I am much obliged to you for the voyages which I received, and began to read last night. My imagination is so captivated upon these occasions, that I seem to partake with the navigators, in all the dangers they encountered. I lose my anchor; my main-sail is rent into shreds; I kill a shark, and by signs converse with a Patagonian, and all this without moving from the fire-side. The principal fruits of these circuits, that have been made around the globe, seem likely to be the amusement of those that staid at home. Discoveries have been made, but such discoveries as will hardly satisfy the expence of such undertakings. We brought away an Indian, and having debauched him, we sent him home again to communicate the infection to his country—fine sport to be sure, but such as will not defray the cost. Nations that live upon bread-fruit, and have no mines to make them worthy of our acquaintance, will be but little visited for the future. So much the better for them! their poverty is indeed their mercy.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER XXXVI.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

October, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am much obliged to you for your American anecdotes, and feel the obligation perhaps more sensibly, the labour of transcribing being in particular that to which I myself have the greatest aversion. The Loyalists are much to be pitied, driven from all the comforts that depend upon and are intimately connected with, a residence in their native land, and sent to cultivate a distant one, without the means of doing it, abandoned too, through a deplorable necessity, by the government to which they have sacrificed all, they exhibit a spectacle of distress which one cannot view even at this distance without participating in what they feel. Why could not some of our useless wastes and forests have been allotted to their support? To have built them houses indeed, and furnished them with implements of husbandry, would have put us to no small expence; but I suppose the increase of population, and the improvement of the soil, would soon have been felt as a na-

tional advantage, and have indemnified the state, if not enriched it. We are bountiful to foreigners, and neglect those of our own household. I remember that compassionating the miseries of the Portuguese, at the time of the Lisbon earthquake, we sent them a ship load of tools to clear away the rubbish with, and to assist them in rebuilding the city. I remember too, it was reported at the time, that the court of Portugal accepted our wheel-barrows and spades with a very ill grace, and treated our bounty with contempt. An act like this in behalf of our brethren, carried only a little farther, might possibly have redeemed them from ruin, have resulted in emolument to ourselves, have been received with joy, and repaid with gratitude. Such are my speculations upon the subject, who not being a politician by profession, and very seldom giving my attention for a moment to such a matter, may not be aware of difficulties and objections, which they of the cabinet can discern with half an eye. Perhaps to have taken under our protection a race of men proscribed by the Congress, might be thought dangerous to the interests we hope to have hereafter in their high and mighty regards and affections. It is ever the way of those who rule the earth, to leave

out of their reckoning Him who rules the universe. They forget that the poor have a friend more powerful to avenge, than they can be to oppress, and that treachery and perfidy must therefore prove bad policy in the end. The Americans themselves appear to me to be in a situation little less pitiable than that of the deserted Loyalists. Their fears of arbitrary imposition were certainly well founded. A struggle therefore might be necessary, in order to prevent it, and this end might surely have been answered without a renunciation of dependence. But the passions of a whole people, once put in motion, are not soon quieted. Contest begets aversion, a little success inspires more ambitious hopes, and thus a slight quarrel terminates at last in a breach never to be healed, and perhaps in the ruin of both parties. It does not seem likely that a country so distinguished by the Creator, with every thing that can make it desirable, should be given up to dessolation for ever; and they may possibly have reason on their side, who suppose that in time it will have the pre-eminence over all others; but the day of such prosperity seems far distant—Omnipotence indeed can hasten it, and it may dawn when it is least expected. But we govern ourselves in all our rea-

'onings by present appearances. Persons at least no better informed than myself, are constrained to do so.

I intended to have taken another subject when I began, and I wish I had. No man living is less qualified to settle nations than I am; but when I write to you, I talk, that is, I write as fast as my pen can run, and on this occasion it ran away with me. I acknowledge myself in your debt for your last favor, but cannot pay you now, unless you will accept as payment, what I know you value more than all I can say beside, the most unfeigned assurances of my affection for you and yours.

Yours, &c.

W. C.

LETTER XXXVII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

Oct. 20, 1783.

I should not have been thus long silent, had I known with certainty where a let-

ter of mine might find you. Your summer excursions however are now at an end, and addressing a line to you in the centre of the busy scene, in which you spend your winter, I am pretty sure of my mark.

I see the winter approaching without much concern, though a passionate lover of fine weather, and the pleasant scenes of summer; but the long evenings have their comforts too, and there is hardly to be found upon earth, I suppose, so snug a creature as an Englishman by his fire-side in the winter. I mean however an Englishman that lives in the country, for in London it is not very easy to avoid intrusion. I have two ladies to read to, sometimes more, but never less—at present we are circumnavigating the globe, and I find the old story with which I amused myself some years since, through the great felicity of a memory not very retentive, almost new. I am however sadly at a loss for Cook's voyage, can you send it? I shall be glad of Foster's too. These together will make the winter pass merrily, and you will much oblige me.

W. C.

The last letter contains a slight sketch of those happy winter evenings, which the poet has painted so exquisitely in verse. The two ladies, whom he mentions as his constant auditors, were Mrs. Unwin, and Lady Austen. The public, already indebted to the friendly and cheerful spirit of the latter, for the pleasant ballad of John Gilpin, had soon to thank her inspiring benevolence for a work of superior dignity, the very master-piece of Cowper's unbounded imagination!

This lady happened, as an admirer of Milton, to be partial to blank verse, and often solicited her poetical friend, to try his powers in that species of composition. After repeated solicitation, he promised her, if she would furnish the subject, to comply with her request.——"Oh!" she replied, "you "can never be in want of a subject:——you can "write upon any:——write upon this Sofa!" The poet obeyed her command, and from the lively repartee of familiar conversation, arose a poem of many thousand verses, unexampled perhaps both in its origin and excellence! A poem of such infinite variety, that it seems to include every subject, and every style, without any dissonance or disorder; and to have flowed, without effort, from inspired

philanthropy, eager to impress upon the hearts of all readers, whatever may lead them, most happily, to the full enjoyment of human life, and to the final attainment of Heaven.

A great part of the Task appears to have been composed in the winter—a circumstance the more remarkable, as the wintery months were generally unfavorable to the health of the poet. In the commencement of the poem, he marks both the season, and the year, in the tender address to his companion.

> "Whose arm this twentieth winter I perceive
> Fast lock'd in mine."

These expressions had induced me to suppose that the Task was begun in the winter of 1784, but a variety of circumstances convinced me that the passage which I had cited, as marking the æra of its commencement, was added in the course of a revisal, and probably in the following year.

I select a series of passages from Cowper's letters to his friend Mr. Bull, in which the poet has described his own progress in his most interesting composition.

August 3, 1783.—" Your sea-side situation, your beautiful prospects, your fine rides, and the sight of the palaces, which you have seen, we have not envied you ; but are glad that you have enjoyed them. Why should we envy any man. Is not our green-house a cabinet of perfumes? It is at this moment fronted with carnations and balsams, with mignionette and roses, with jessamine and woodbine, and wants nothing but your pipe to make it truly Arabian ;—a wilderness of sweets! The Sofa is ended, but not finished, a paradox, which your natural acumen, sharpened by habits of logical attention, will enable you to reconcile in a moment. Do not imagine, however, that I lounge over it—on the contrary, I find it severe exercise, to mould and fashion it to my mind!"

February 22, 1781.—" I congratulate you on the thaw—I suppose it is an universal blessing, and probably felt all over Europe. I myself am the better for it, who wanted nothing that might make the frost supportable ; what reason, therefore, have they to rejoice, who being in want of all things, were exposed to its utmost rigour?——The ice in my ink, however, is not yet dissolved.—It was long before the frost seized it, but at last it pre-

vailed.—The Sofa has consequently received little or no addition since.—It consists at present of four books, and part of a fifth: when the sixth is finished, the work is accomplished, but if I may judge by my present inability, that period is at a considerable distance."

The following extract not only mentions the completion of his great work, but gives a particular account of his next production.

November 8, 1784.—"The Task, as you know, is gone to the press: since it went I have been employed in writing another poem, which I am now transcribing, and which in a short time, I design shall follow. It is entitled, Tirocinium, or a Review of Schools: the business and purpose of it are, to censure the want of discipline, and the scandalous inattention to morals, that obtain in them; especially in the largest; and to recommend private tuition as a mode of education preferable on all accounts; to call upon fathers to become tutors of their own sons, where that is practicable; to take home a domestic tutor, where it is not; and if neither can be done, to place them under the care of such a man, as he, to whom I am writing; some rural parson, whose attention is limited to a few."

The reader will find the poet himself relating, in more than one letter of the next year, some particulars of the time in which his great work The Task was composed. I still retain the account that I had originally given of its progress, because I wish to preserve the interesting passages of his letters to Mr. Bull, selected for that purpose, and because my account, resting on his own authority, happens to be rather more exact than his cursory account of the time when the task was begun, which will appear in a subsequent letter to Mr. Newton. Writing to that gentleman, on the 20th of October, 1784, Cowper says of his Task, then in the press, "I began it about this time twelvemonth." These words of hasty and imperfect recollection, might give rise to a persuasion, that this extensive and admirable production was completed in a year. But as it is proved by the first extract from the poet's letters to Mr. Bull, that the first book (entitled the Sofa) was ended on the 3d of August, 1783, we may reasonably conclude this interesting poem was begun in June or July. It was not imparted, as it advanced, to any of the poet's confidential friends, except the two ladies with whom he lived at the time of its commencement, and his kindly attentive and sympathetic neighbour, Mr. Bull, who

had shewn his benevolent zeal in encouraging the spirit of Cowper to cheer and amuse itself in poetical pursuits. The final verses of the Task were probably written in September 1784, as Cowper sent a transcript of the poem for the press, to his favorite young friend, Mr. Unwin, early in October. His modest reserve appears very remarkable in his not having communicated this composition even to Mr. Unwin, till it was absolutely finished, and his tender delicacy of regard, and attention, to that young friend was amiably displayed in assigning to him the honorable office of revising and consigning to the press a work so important.

The year 1784, was a memorable period in the life of the poet, not only as it witnessed the completion of one extensive performance, and the commencement of another, (his translation of Homer) but as it terminated his intercourse with that highly pleasing and valuable friend, whose alacrity of attention and advice, had induced him to engage in both.

Delightful and advantageous as his friendship with Lady Austen had proved, he now began to feel, that it grew impossible to preserve that triple cord, which his own pure heart had led him to suppose

nor speedily to be broken. Mrs. Unwin though by no means destitute of mental accomplishments, was eclipsed by the brilliancy of the poet's new friend, and naturally became uneasy, under the apprehension of being so, for to a woman of sensibility, what evil can be more afflicting, than the fear of losing all mental influence over a man of genius and virtue whom she has been long accustomed to inspirit and to guide?

Cowper perceived the painful necessity of sacrificing a great portion of his present gratifications. He felt, that he must relinquish that ancient friend, whom he regarded as a venerable parent; or the new associate, whom he idolized, as a sister of a heart and mind peculiarly congenial to his own. His gratitude for past services of unexampled magnitude, and weight, would not allow him to hesitate; with a resolution and delicacy, that do the highest honor to his feelings, he wrote a farewell letter to Lady Austen, explaining, and lamenting the circumstances, that forced him to renounce the society of a friend, whose enchanting talents, and kindness, had proved so agreeably instrumental to the revival of his spirits, and to the exercise of his fancy.

In those very interesting conferences with which

I was honored by Lady Austen, I was irresistibly led to express an anxious desire for the sight of a letter written by Cowper in a situation that must have called forth all the finest powers of his eloquence as a monitor and a friend. The lady confirmed me in my opinion that a more admirable letter could not be written; and had it existed at that time, I am persuaded from her noble frankness and zeal for the honor of the departed poet, she would have given me a copy; but she ingenuously confessed, that in a moment of natural mortification, she burnt this very tender, yet resolute letter. I mention the circumstance, because a literary correspondent, whom I have great reason to esteem, has recently expressed to me a wish (which may perhaps be general) that I could introduce into this compilation the letter in question. Had it been confided to my care, I am persuaded I should have thought it very proper for publication, as it displayed both the tenderness and the magnanimity of Cowper, nor could I have deemed it a want of delicacy towards the memory of Lady Austen, to exhibit a proof, that animated by the warmest admiration of the great poet, whose fancy she could so successfully call forth, she was willing to devote her life and fortune to his service and pro-

tection. The sentiment is to be regarded as honorable to the lady; it is still more honorable to the poet, that with such feelings, as rendered him perfectly sensible of all Lady Austen's fascinating powers, he could return her tenderness with innocent gallantry, and yet resolutely preclude himself from her society when he could no longer enjoy it without appearing deficient in gratitude towards the compassionate and generous guardian of his sequestered life. No person can justly blame Mrs. Unwin for feeling apprehensive that Cowper's intimacy with a lady of such extraordinary talents, might lead him into perplexities, of which he was by no means aware. This remark was suggested by a few elegant and tender verses, addressed by the poet to Lady Austen, and shewn to me by that lady.

Those who were acquainted with the unsuspecting innocence, and sportive gaiety of Cowper, would readily allow, if they had seen the verses to which I allude, that they are such as he might have addressed to a real sister; but a lady only called by that endearing name, may be easily pardoned, if she was induced by them to hope, that they might possibly be a prelude to a still dearer alliance. To me they appeared expressive of that peculiarity in his cha-

racter, a gay and tender gallantry, perfectly distinct from amorous attachment. If the lady, who was the subject of the verses, had given them to me with a permission to print them, I should have thought the poet himself might have approved of their appearance, accompanied with such a commentary.

In the whole course of this work I have endeavoured to recollect, on every doubtful occasion, the feelings of Cowper, and made it a rule to reject whatever my perfect intimacy with those feelings, could lead me to suppose the spirit of the departed poet, might wish me to lay aside as unfit for publication. I consider an editor as guilty of the basest injury to the dead, who admits into the posthumous volumes of an author, whom he professes to love and admire, any composition which his own conscience informs him *that author*, if he could speak from the tomb, would direct him to suppress. On this principle I have declined to print some letters which entered more than I think the public ought to enter, into the history of a trifling feminine discord, that disturbed the perfect harmony of the happy trio at Olney, when Lady Austen, and Mrs. Unwin were the united inspirers of the poet. Yet as the brief and true account which I gave of their separation, has

been thought to cast a shade of censure on the temper of Mrs. Unwin, which I was far from intending, in justice to the memory of that exemplary and sublime female friend, I here introduce a passage from a letter of Cowper to the Rev. William Unwin, honorable to both the ladies in question, as it describes them in a moment of generous reconciliation.

"I enclose a letter from Lady Austen, which "I beg you to return me in your next.——We are "reconciled. She seized the first opportunity to "embrace your Mother with tears of the tenderest "affection, and I of course am satisfied. We were "all a little awkward at first, but now are as easy "as ever."

This letter happens to have no date, but the expressions I have cited from it are sufficient to prove that Mrs. Unwin, instead of having shewn an envious infirmity of temper on this occasion, must have conducted herself with a delicate liberality of mind.

If Cowper was painfully perplexed at this season by an abundance of tender attention in a female associate, we may perceive from the following letter that he felt pain also, but of a very different nature

from the unmerited coldness and incivility of two men, who were among the favorite companions of his early life.

LETTER XXXVIII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Nov. 10, 1781.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I have lost, and wasted, almost all my writing time, in making an alteration in the verses I either inclose or subjoin, for I know not which will be the case at present. If prose comes readily, I shall transcribe them on another sheet, otherwise, on this. You will understand, before you have read many of them, that they are not for the press. I lay you under no other injunctions. The unkind behaviour of our acquaintance, though it is possible, that in some instances, it may not much affect our happiness, nor engage many of our thoughts, will sometimes obtrude itself upon us with a degree of importunity, not easily resisted, and then perhaps though almost insensible of it before, we feel more than the occasion will justify. In such a moment it was, that I conceived this poem, and gave loose to a

degree of resentment which perhaps I ought not to have indulged, but which in a cooler hour I cannot altogether condemn. My former intimacy with the two characters was such, that I could not but feel myself provoked by the neglect with which they both treated me on a late occasion. So much by way of preface.

You ought not to have supposed, that if you had visited us last summer, the pleasure of the interview would have been all your own. By such an imagination you wrong both yourself and us. Do you suppose we do not love you? You cannot suspect your mother of coldness; and as to me, assure yourself I have no friend in the world with whom I communicate without the least reserve, yourself excepted. Take heart then, and when you find a favorable opportunity to come, assure yourself of such a welcome from us both, as you have a right to look for. But I have observed in your two last letters, somewhat of a dejection and melancholy, that I am afraid you do not sufficiently strive against. I suspect you of being too sedentary. "You cannot walk." Why you cannot is best known to yourself. I am sure your legs are long enough, and your person does not overload them. But I beseech you

ride, and ride often. I think I have heard you say you cannot even do that without an object. Is not health an object? Is not a new prospect, which in most countries is gained at the end of every mile, an object? Assure yourself that easy chairs are no friends to chearfulness, and that a long winter, spent by the fire-side, is a prelude to an unhealthy spring. Every thing I see in the fields, is to me an object, and I can look at the same rivulet, or at a handsome tree, every day of my life, with a new pleasure. This indeed is partly the effect of a natural taste for rural beauty, and partly the effect of habit, for I never in all my life have let slip the opportunity of breathing fresh air, and conversing with nature, when I could fairly catch it. I earnestly recommend a cultivation of the same taste to you, suspecting that you have neglected it, and suffer for doing so.

Last Saturday se'ennight, the moment I had composed myself in my bed, your mother too having just got into her's, we were alarmed by a cry of fire, on the staircase. I immediately rose, and saw sheets of flame above the roof of Mr. Palmer's house, our opposite neighbour. The mischief however was not so near to him as it seemed to be, having begun at a butcher's yard, at a little distance. We made all

haste down stairs, and soon threw open the street door, for the reception of as much lumber, of all sorts, as our house would hold, brought into it by several who thought it necessay to move their furniture. In two hours time, we had so much that we could hold no more, even the uninhabited part of our building being filled. Not that we ourselves were entirely secure—an adjoining thatch, on which fell showers of sparks, being rather a dangerous neighbour. Providentially however, the night was perfectly calm, and we escaped. By four in the morning it was extinguished, having consumed many out-buildings, but no dwelling-house. Your mother suffered a little in her health, from the fatigue and bustle of the night, but soon recovered. As for me, it hurt me not. The slightest wind would have carried the fire to the very extremity of the town, there being multitudes of thatched buildings, and faggot-piles so near to each other, that they must have proved infalible conductors.

The balloons prosper: I congratulate you upon it. Thanks to Montgolfier, we shall fly at last.

Yours my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER XXXIX.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Nov. 24, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

An evening unexpectedly retired, which your mother and I spend without company, (an occurrence far from frequent,) affords me a favorable opportunity to write by tomorrow's post, which else I could not have found. You are very good to consider my literary necessities with so much attention, and I feel proportionably grateful. Blair's Lectures, (though I suppose they must make a part of my private studies, not being *ad captum fœminarum*,) will be perfectly welcome. You say you felt my verses, I assure you that in this you followed my example, for I felt them first. A man's lordship is nothing to me, any farther than in connexion with qualities that entitle him to my respect. If he thinks himself privileged by it, to treat me with neglect, I am his humble servant, and shall never be at a loss to render him an equivalent. I will not however belie my knowledge of mankind so much, as to seem surprized at a treatment which I had abundant rea-

son to expect. To these men with whom I was once intimate, and for many years, I am no longer necessary, no longer convenient, or in any respect an object. They think of me as of the man in the moon, and whether I have a lantern, or a dog and faggot, or whether I have neither of those desirable accommodations, is to them a matter of perfect indifference: upon that point we are agreed, our indifference is mutual, and were I to publish again, which is not impossible, I should give them a proof of it.

L' Estrange's Josephus has lately furnished us with evening lectures. But the historian is so tediously circumstantial, and the translator so insupportably coarse and vulgar, that we are all three weary of him. How would Tacitus have shone upon such a subject, great master as he was of the art of description, concise without obscurity, and affecting without being poetical. But so it was ordered, and for wise reasons no doubt, that the greatest calamities any people eversu ffered, and an accomplishment of one of the most signal prophecies in the scripture, should be recorded by one of the worst writers. The man was a temporizer too, and courted the favor of his Roman masters, at the expence of his own creed, or else an infidel, and absolutely disbelieved it. You

will think me very difficult to please, I quarrel with Josephus for the want of elegance, and with some of our modern historians for having too much. With him, for running right forward like a gazette, without stopping to make a single observation by the way, and with them for pretending to delineate characters that existed two thousand years ago, and to discover the motives by which they were influenced, with the same precision as if they had been their contemporaries.—Simplicity is become a very rare quality in a writer. In the decline of great kingdoms, and where refinement in all the arts is carried to an excess, I suppose it is always rare. The latter Roman writers are remarkable for false ornament, they were yet no doubt admired by the readers of their own day; and with respect to authors of the present æra, the most popular among them appear to me equally censurable on the same account. Swift and Addison were simple.

Your mother wants room for a postscript, so my lecture must conclude abruptly.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER XL.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It is hard upon us striplings, who have uncles still living (N. B. I myself have an uncle still alive) that those venerable gentlemen should stand in our way, even when the ladies are in question; that I for instance, should find in one page of your letter, a hope, that Miss Shuttleworth would be of your party, and be told in the next, that she is engaged to your uncle. Well we may perhaps never be uncles, but we may reasonably hope that the time is coming, when others, as young as we are now, shall envy us the privileges of old age, and see us engross that share in the attention of the ladies, to which their youth must aspire in vain. Make our compliments if you please to your sister Eliza, and tell her that we are both mortified at having missed the pleasure of seeing her.

Balloons are so much the mode, that even in this country we have attempted a balloon. You may possibly remember that at a place called Weston, a

little more than a mile from Olney, there lives a family, whose name is Throckmorton. The present possessor is a young man whom I remember a boy. He has a wife, who is young, genteel, and handsome. They are Papists, but much more amiable than many Protestants. We never had any intercourse with the family, though ever since we lived here, we have enjoyed the range of their pleasure-grounds, having been favored with a key, which admits us into all. When this man succeeded to the estate, on the death of his elder brother, and came to settle at Weston, I sent him a complimentary card, requesting the continuance of that privilege, having till then enjoyed it, by favor of his mother, who on that occasion went to finish her days at Bath. You may conclude that he granted it, and for about two years nothing more passed between us. A fortnight ago, I received an invitation in the civilest terms, in which he told me, that the next day he should attempt to fill a balloon, and if it would be any pleasure to me to be present, should be happy to see me. Your mother and I went. The whole country were there, but the balloon could not be filled. The endeavour was, I believe very philosophically made, but such a process depends for its success upon such niceties as make it

very precarious. Our reception was however flatter-ing to a great degree, insomuch that more notice seemed to be taken of us, than we could possibly have expected, indeed rather more than of any of his other guests. They even seemed anxious to recommend themselves to our regards. We drank chocolate, and were asked to dine, but were engaged. A day or two afterwards, Mrs. Unwin and I walked that way, and were overtaken in a shower. I found a tree, that I thought would shelter us both, a large elm, in a grove, that fronts the mansion. Mrs. T. observed us, and running towards us in the rain, insisted on our walking in. He was gone out. We sat chatting with her 'till the weather cleared up, and then at her instance took a walk with her in the garden. The garden is almost their only walk, and is certainly their only retreat in which they are not liable to interruption. She offered us a key of it, in a manner, that made it impossible not to accept it, and said she would send us one; a few days afterwards in the cool of the evening, we walked that way again. We saw them going toward the house and exchanged bows, and curtsies at a distance, but did not join them. In a few minutes, when we had passed the house, and had almost reached the gate that opens out of the

park into the adjoining field, I heard the iron gate belonging to the court yard ring, and saw Mr. T. advancing hastily toward us, we made equal ha te to meet him, he presented to us the key, which told him I esteemed a singular favor, and after a few such speeches as are made on such occasions, we parted. This happened about a week ago. I concluded nothing less than that all this civility and attention, was designed on their part, as a prelude to a nearer acquaintance ; but here at present the matter rests. I should like exceedingly to be on an easy footing there, to give a morning call now and then, and to receive one, but nothing more. For though he is one of the most agreeable men I ever saw, I could not wish to visit him in any other way ; neither our house, furniture, servants or income, being such as qualify us to make entertainments, neither would I on any account be introduced to the neighbouring gentry. Mr. T. is altogether a man of fashion, and respectable on every account.

I have told you a long story. Farewel. We number the days as they pass, and are glad that we shall see you and your sister soon.

Yours, &c.

W. C.

LETTER XLI.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Jan. 3, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Your silence began to be distressing to both your Mother and me, and had I not received a letter from you last night, I should have written by this post to enquire after your health. How can it be, that you, who are not stationary like me, but often change your situation, and mix with a variety of company, should suppose me furnished with such abundant materials, and yourself destitute. I assure you faithfully, that I do not find the soil of Olney prolific in the growth of such articles as make letter-writing a desirable employment. No place contributes less to the catalogue of incidents, or is more scantily supplied with anecdotes worth notice.

We have

> One parson, one poet, one belman, one cryer,
> And the poor poet is our only 'squire.

Guess then if I have not more reason to expect two letters from you, than you one from me.

principal occurrence, and that which affects me most at present, came to pass this moment. The stair-foot door being swelled by the thaw, would do any thing better than it would open. An attempt to force it upon that office has been attended with such a horrible dissolution of its parts, that we were immediately obliged to introduce a chirurgeon, commonly called a carpenter, whose applications we have some hope will cure it of a lock'd jaw, and heal its numerous fractures. His medicines are powerful chalybeates, and a certain glutinous salve, which he tells me is made of the tails and ears of animals. The consequences however are rather unfavorable to my present employment, which does not well brook noise, bustle, and interruption.

This being the case, I shall not perhaps be either so perspicuous, or so diffuse, on the subject of which you desire my sentiments as I should be, but I will do my best. Know then, that I have learnt long since, of Abbe Raynal, to hate all monopolies, as injurious, howsoever managed, to the interests of commerce at large: consequently the charter in question would not, at any rate, be a favorite of mine. This however is of itself, I confess, no sufficient reason to justify the assumption of it. But such reasons I think

are not wanting. A grant of that kind, it is well known, is always forfeited by the non-performance of the conditions. And why not equally forfeited if those conditions are exceeded; if the design of it be perverted, and its operation extended to objects which were never in the contemplation of the donor? This appears to me to be no misrepresentation of their case, whose charter is supposed to be in danger. It constitutes them a trading company, and gives them an exclusive right to traffic in the East Indies. But it does no more. It invests them with no sovereignty; it does not convey to them the royal prerogative of making war and peace, which the king cannot alienate, if he would. But this prerogative they have exercised, and forgetting the terms of their institution, have possessed themselves of an immense territory, which they have ruled with a rod of iron, to which it is impossible they should even have a right, unless such a one as it is a disgrace to plead—a right of conquest. The potentates of this country they dash in pieces like a potter's vessel, as often as they please, making the happiness of thirty millions of mankind, a consideration subordinate to that of their own emolument, oppressing them as often as it may serve a lucrative purpose, and in no instance,

that I have ever heard, consulting their interest or advantage. That government therefore is bound to interfere, and to un-king these tyrants, is to me self evident. And if having subjugated so much of this miserable world, it is therefore necessary that we must keep possession of it, it appears to me a duty so binding on the legislature to resume it from the hands of those usurpers, that I should think a curse, and a bitter one, must follow the neglect of it. But suppose this were done, can they be legally deprived of their charter? In truth I think so. If the abuse and perversion of a charter can amount to a defeasance of it, never were they so grossly palpable as in this instance; never was charter so justly forfeited. Neither am I at all afraid that such a measure should be drawn into a precedent unless it could be alledged, as a sufficient reason for not hanging a rogue, that perhaps magistracy might grow wanton in the exercise of such a power, and now and then hang up an honest man for its amusement. When the governors of the bank shall have deserved the same severity, I hope they will meet with it. In the mean time I do not think them a whit more in jeopardy because a corporation of plunderers have been brought to justice.

We are well, and love you all. I never wrote in such a hurry, nor in such disturbance. Pardon the effects, and believe me yours affectionately,

W. C.

LETTER XLII.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

Jan. 18, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I too have taken leave of the old year, and parted with it just when you did, but with very different sentiments and feelings upon the occasion. I looked back upon all the passages and occurrences of it, as a traveller looks back upon a wilderness, through which he has passed with weariness, and sorrow of heart, reaping no other fruit of his labour, than the poor consolation, that, dreary as the desert was, he left it all behind him. The traveller would find even this comfort considerably lessened, if as soon as he had passed one wilderness, another of equal length, and equally desolate expect him. In this particular, his experience and

mine would exactly tally. I should rejoice indeed, that the old year is over and gone, if I had not every reason to prophecy a new one similar to it.

I am glad you have found so much hidden treasure: and Mrs. Unwin desires me to tell you, that you did her no more than justice, in believing that she would rejoice in it. It is not easy to surmise the reason why the reverend doctor, your predecessor, concealed it. Being a subject of a free government, and I suppose full of the divinity most in fashion, he could not fear lest his great riches should expose him to persecution. Nor can I suppose that he held it any disgrace for a dignitary of the church to be wealthy at a time when churchmen in general spare no pains to become so. But the wisdom of some men has a droll sort of knavishness in it, much like that of the magpie who hides what he finds with a deal of contrivance, merely for the pleasure of doing it.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER XLIII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

January, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

When I first resolved to write an answer to your last, this evening, I had no thought of any thing more sublime than prose. But before I began, it occurred to me that perhaps you would not be displeased with an attempt to give a poetical translation of the lines you sent me. They are so beautiful, that I felt the temptation irresistible. At least, as the French say, it was *plus forte que moi;* and I accordingly complied. By this means I have lost an hour; and whether I shall be able to fill my sheet before supper, is as yet doubtful. But I will do my best.

For your remarks, I think them perfectly just. You have no reason to distrust your taste, or to submit the trial of it to me. You understand the use, and the force of language as well as any man. You have quick feelings, and you are fond of poetry. How is it possible then that you should not be a judge of it. I venture to hazard only one alteration, which, as it appears to me, would amount to a little

improvement. The seventh and eighth lines, I think I should like better thus ——

Aspirante levi zephyro et redeunte serenâ
Anni temperie fœcundo è cespite surgunt.

My reason is, that the word *cûm* is repeated too soon. At least my ear does not like it, and when it can be done without injury to the sense, there seems to me to be an elegance in diversifying the expression, as much as possible, upon similar occasions. It discovers a command of phrase. and gives a more masterly air to the piece. If *extincta* stood unconnected with *telis,* I should prefer your word *micant,* to the doctor's *vigent*. But the latter seems to stand more in direct opposition to that sort of extinction, which is effected by a shaft or arrow. In the day-time the stars may be said to die, and in the night to recover their strength. Perhaps the doctor had in his eye, that noble line of Gray's—" *Hyperion's march they spy, and glitt'ring shafts of war !*" But it is a beautiful composition. It is tender, touching and elegant. It is not easy to do it justice in English, as for example*

* The Verses appearing again with the original in the next Letter, are omitted.

Many thanks for the books, which being most admirably packed, came safe. They will furnish us with many a winter evening's amusement. We are glad, that you intend to be the carrier back.

We rejoice too, that your cousin has remembered you in her will. The money she left to those who attended her hearse, would have been better bestowed upon you; and by this time perhaps she thinks so. Alas! what an enquiry does that thought suggest, and how impossible to make it to any purpose! what are the employments of the departed spirit? and where does it subsist? Has it any cognizance of earthly things? Is it transported to an immeasurable distance; or is it still, though imperceptible to us, conversant with the same scene, and interested in what passes here? How little we know of a state to which we are all destined; and how does the obscurity, that hangs over that undiscovered country, increase the anxiety we sometimes feel as we are journeying towards it? It is sufficient however, for such as you, and a few more of my acquaintance to know, that in your separate state you will be happy. Provision is made for your reception; and you will have no cause to regret aught, that you have left behind.

I have written to Mr. ——. My letter went this morning. How I love, and honor, that man! For many reasons I dare not tell him, how much. But I hate the frigidity of the style, in which I am forced to address him. That line of Horace—"*Dii tibi divitias dederant artemque fruendi*"——was never so applicable to the poet's friend, as to Mr. ——. My bosom burns to immortalize him. But prudence says "Forbear!" and, though a poet, I pay respect to her injunctions.

I sincerely give you joy of the good you have unconsciously done, by your example and conversation. That you seem to yourself not to deserve the acknowledgment your friend makes of it, is a proof that you do. Grace is blind to its own beauty, whereas such virtues as men may reach without it, are remarkable self-admirers. May you make such impressions upon many of your order! I know none that need them more.

You do not want my praises of your conduct towards Mr. ——. It is well for him however, and still better for yourself, that you are capable of such a part. It was said of some good man (my memory does not serve me with his name) "do him an ill-turn, and you make him your friend for ever." But

it is Christianity only that forms such friends. I wish his father may be duly affected by this instance and proof of your superiority to those ideas of you, which he has so unreasonably harboured. He is not in my favor now, nor will be upon any other terms.

I laughed at the comments you make on your own feelings, when the subject of them was a newspaper eulogium. But it was a laugh of pleasure, and approbation: such indeed is the heart, and so is it made up. There are few that can do good, and keep their own secret, none perhaps without a struggle. Yourself, and your friend ——, are no very common instances of the fortitude, that is necessary, in such a conflict. In former days, I have felt my heart beat and every vein throb, upon such an occasion. To publish my own deed was wrong. I knew it to be so. But to conceal it seemed like a voluntary injury to myself. Sometimes I could, and sometimes I could not succeed. My occasions for such conflicts indeed were not very numerous.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER XLIV.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

Jan. 25. 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

This contention about East-Indian patronage, seems not unlikely to avenge upon us, by its consequences, the mischiefs we have done there. The matter in dispute is too precious to be relinquished by either party; and each is jealous of the influence the other would derive from the possession of it. In a country, whose politics have so long rolled upon the wheels of corruption, an affair of such value must prove a weight in either scale, absolutely destructive of the very idea of a balance. Every man has his sentiments upon this subject, and I have mine. Were I constituted umpire of this strife, with full powers to decide it, I would tie a talent of lead about the neck of this patronage, and plunge it into the depths of the sea. To speak less figuratively, I would abandon all territorial interest in a country, to which we can have no right, and which we cannot govern with any security to the happiness of the inhabitants, or without the danger of incurring either perpetual broils, or the most insupportable ty-

ranny at home. That sort of tyranny I mean, which flatters and tantalizes the subject with a show of freedom, and in reality allows him nothing more, bribing to the right and left, rich enough to afford the purchase of a thousand consciences, and consequently strong enough, if it happen to meet with an incorruptible one, to render all the efforts of that man, or of twenty such men, if they could be found, romantic, and of no effect. I am the kings most loyal subject, and most obedient humble servant. But by his majesty's leave, I must acknowledge I am not altogether convinced of the rectitude even of his own measures, or the simplicity of his views; and if I were satisfied that he himself is to be trusted it is nevertheless palpable that he cannot answer for his successors. At the same time he is my king, and I reverence him as such. I account his prerogative sacred, and shall never wish prosperity to a party, that invades it, and under that pretence of patriotism, would annihilate all the consequence of a character, essential to the very being of the constitution. For these reasons I am sorry that we have any dominion in the East;—that we have any such emoluments to contend about. Their immense value will probably prolong the dispute, and

such struggles having been already made in the conduct of it, as have shaken our very foundations, it seems not unreasonable to suppose that still greater efforts, and more fatal are behind; and after all, the decision in favor of either side may be ruinous to the whole. In the mean time, that the company themselves are but indifferently qualified for the kingship, is most deplorably evident. What shall I say therefore? I distrust the court, I suspect the patriots, I put the company entirely aside, as having forfeited all claim to confidence in such a business, and see no remedy of course, but in the annihilation, if that could be accomplished, of the very existence of our authority in the East-Indies.

The late Doctor Jortin,
Had the good fortune,
To write these verses
Upon tombs and hearses;
Which I, being jinglish,
Have done into English.

IN BREVITATEM VITÆ SPATII HOMINIBUS CONCESSI.

Hei mihi! Lege ratâ sol occidit atque resurgit
Lunaque mutatæ reparat dispendia formæ,
Astraque, purpurei telis extincta diei,
Rursus nocte vigent. Humiles telluris alumni,
Graminis herba virens, et florum picta propago,
Quos crudelis hyems lethali tabe peredit,
Cum zephyri vox blanda vocat, rediitque sereni
Temperies anni, fœcundo é cespite surgunt.
Nos domini rerum, nos, magna et pulchra minati,
Cum breve ver vitæ robustaque transiit ætas,
Deficimus; nec nos ordo revolubilis auras
Reddit in ætherias, tumuli neque claustra resolvit.

ON THE SHORTNESS OF *HUMAN LIFE.*

Suns that set, and moons that wane,
Rise, and are restored again.
Stars that orient day subdues,
Night at her return renews.
Herbs and flowers, the beauteous birth
Of the genial womb of earth,
Suffer but a transient death
From the winter's cruel breath.

Zephyr speaks; serener skies
Warm the glebe, and they arise.
We, alas! earth's haughty kings,
We, that promise, mighty things,
Losing soon life's happy prime,
Droop, and fade, in little time.
Spring returns, but not our bloom,
Still 'tis winter in the tomb.

Yours,

My dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER XLV.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

February, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am glad that you have finished a work, of which I well remember the beginning, and which I was sorry you thought it expedient to discontinue. Your reason for not proceeding was however such as I was obliged to acquiesce in, being suggested by a jealousy you felt, "lest your

spirit should be betrayed into acrimony, in writing upon such a subject." I doubt not you have sufficiently guarded that point, and indeed, at the time, could not discover that you had failed in it. I have busied myself this morning in contriving a Greek title, and in seeking a motto. The motto you mention is certainly apposite. But I think it an objection, that it has been so much in use; almost every writer, that has claimed a liberty to think for himself upon whatever subject, having chosen it. I therefore send you one, which I never saw in that shape yet, and which appears to me equally apt and proper. The Greek word, δεσμος. which signifies literally a shackle, may figuratively serve to express those chains, which bigotry and prejudice cast upon the mind. It seems, therefore, to speak like a lawyer, no misnomer of your book, to call it,

Μισοδεσμος.

The following pleases me most of all the mottoes I have thought of. But with respect both to that and the title you will use your pleasure.

Querelis
Haud jus tis assurgis, et inita jurgia jactas.

Ln. X. 94.

From the little I have seen, and the much I have heard, of the manager of the Review you mention, I cannot feel even the smallest push of a desire to serve him in the capacity of a poet. Indeed I dislike him so much, that, had I a drawer-full of pieces fit for his purpose, I hardly think I should contribute to his collection. It is possible too, that I may live to be once more a publisher myself; in which case, I should be glad to find myself in possession of any such original pieces, as might decently make their appearance in a volume of my own. At present however I have nothing that would be of use to him, nor have I many opportunities of composing, Sunday being the only day in the week which we spend alone.

I am at this moment pinch'd for time, but was desirous of proving to you, with what alacrity my Greek and Latin memory are always ready to obey you, and therefore, by the first post, have, to the best of my ability complied with your request.

Believe me, my dear friend,

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

LETTER XLVI.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

Feb. 10, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The morning is my writing time, and in the morning I have no spirits. So much the worse for my correspondents. Sleep that refreshes my body, seems to cripple me in every other respect. As the evening approaches, I grow more alert, and when I am retiring to bed, am more fit for mental occupation than at any other time. So it fares with us, whom they call nervous. By a strange inversion of the animal œconomy, we are ready to sleep when we have most need to be awake, and go to bed just when we might sit up to some purpose. The watch is irregularly wound up, it goes in the night when it is not wanted, and in the day stands still. In many respects we have the advantage of our fore-fathers the Picts. We sleep in a whole skin, and are not obliged to submit to the painful operation of punctuating ourselves from head to foot, in order that we may be decently dressed, and fit to appear abroad. But on the other hand, we have

reason enough to envy them their tone of nerves, and that flow of spirits, which effectually secured them from all uncomfortable impressions of a gloo ny atmosphere, and from every shade of melancho y from every other cause. They understood, I suppose, the use of vulnerary herbs, having frequent occasion for some skill in surgery, but physicians, I presume, they had none, having no need of any. Is it possible, that a creature like myself, can be descended from such progenitors, in whom there appears not a single trace of family resemblance? What an alteration have a few ages made! They, without clothing, would defy the severest season, and I, with all the accommodations that art has since invented, am hardly secure even in the mildest. If the wind blows upon me when my pores are open, I catch cold. A cough is the consequence. I suppose if such a disorder could have seized a Pict, his friends would have concluded that a bone had stuck in his throat, and that he was in some danger of choking. They would perhaps have addrest themselves to the cure of his cough, by thrusting their fingers into his gullet, which would only have exasperated the case. But they would never have thought of administering laudanum, my only remedy. For this difference however, that has

obtained between me and my ancestors, I am indebted to the luxurious practices, and enfeebling self-indulgence, of a long line of grandsires, who from generation to generation, have been employed in deteriorating the breed, till at last the collected effects of all their follies have centered in my puny self. A man indeed, but not in the image of those that went before me. A man, who sigh and groan, who wear out life in dejection and oppression of spirits, and who never think of the Aborigines of the country to which I belong, without wishing that I had been born among them. The evil is without a remedy, unless the ages that are passed could be recalled, my whole pedigree be permitted to live again, and being properly admonished to beware of enervating sloth and refinement, would preserve their hardiness of nature unimpaired, and transmit the desirable quality to their posterity. I once saw Adam in a dream. We sometimes say of a picture that we doubt not its likeness to the original, though we never saw him; a judgment we have some reason to form, when the face is strongly charactered, and the features full of expression. So I think of my visionary Adam, and for a similar reason. His figure was awkward indeed in the extreme. It was evident

that he had never been taught by a Frenchman to hold his head erect, or to turn out his toes; to dispose gracefully of his arms, or to simper without a meaning. But if Mr. Bacon was called upon to produce a statue of Hercules, he need not wish for a juster pattern. He stood like a rock; the size of his limbs, the prominence of his muscles, and the height of his stature, all conspired to bespeak him a creature whose strength had suffered no diminution; and who being the first of his race, did not come into the world under a necessity of sustaining a load of infirmities, derived to him from the intemperance of others. He was as much stouter than a Pict, as I suppose a Pict to have been than I. Upon my hypothesis therefore, there has been a gradual declension, in point of bodily vigour, from Adam down to me, at least if my dream were a just representation of that gentleman, and deserve the credit I cannot help giving it, such must have been the case.

Yours,

My dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER XLVII.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

February, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I give you joy of a thaw, that has put an end to a frost of nine weeks continuance, with very little interruption; the longest that has happened since the year 1739. May I presume that you feel yourself indebted to me for intelligence, which perhaps no other of your correspondents will vouchsafe to communicate, though they are as well apprized of it, and as much convinced of the truth of it, as myself. It is, I suppose, every where felt as a blessing, but no where more sensibly than at Olney; though even at Olney the severity of it has been alleviated in behalf of many. The same benefactor, who befriended them last year, has with equal liberality administered a supply to their necessities in the present. Like the subterraneous flue that warms my myrtles, he does good and is unseen. His injunctions of secrecy are still as rigourous as ever, and must therefore be observed with the same attention. He however is a happy man,

whose philanthropy is not like mine, an impotent principle, spending itself in fruitless wishes. At the same time, I confess, it is a consolation, and I feel it an honor, to be employed as the conductor, and to be trusted as the dispenser of another man's bounty. Some have been saved from perishing, and all, that could partake of it, from the most pitiable distress.

I will not apologize for my politics, or suspect them of error, merely because they are taken up from the news-papers. I take it for granted, that those reporters of the wisdom of our representatives are tolerably correct and faithful. Were they not, and were they guilty of frequent and gross misrepresentation, assuredly they would be chastised by the rod of parliamentary criticism. Could I be present at the debates, I should indeed have a better opinion of my documents. But if the house of commons be the best school of British politics, which I think an undeniable assertion, then he that reads what passes there has opportunities of information, inferior only to theirs who hear for themselves, and can be present upon the spot. Thus qualified I take courage; and when a certain reverend neighbour of ours curls his nose at me, and holds my opinions cheap, merely because he has passed through London, I am not

altogether convinced that he has reason on his side. I do not know that the air of the metropolis has a power to brighten the intellects, or that to sleep a night in the great city is a necessary cause of wisdom. He tells me that Mr. Fox is a rascal, and that Lord North is a villain, that every creature execrates them both, and that I ought to do so too. But I beg to be excused. Villain and rascal are appellations, which we, who do not converse with great men, are rather sparing in the use of. I can conceive them both to be most entirely persuaded of the rectitude of their conduct, and the rather, because I feel myself much inclined to believe, that, being so, they are not mistaken. I cannot think, that secret influence is a bug-bear, a phantom conjured up to serve a purpose; the mere *shibboleth* of a party: (and being, and having always been, somewhat of an enthusiast on the subject of British liberty,) I am not able to withhold my reverence and good wishes from the man, whoever he be, that exerts himself in a constitutional way to oppose it.

Caraccioli upon the subject of self-acquaintance was never, I believe, translated. I have sometimes thought that the Theological Miscellany might be glad of a chapter of it monthly. It is a work which

I much admire. You, who are master of their plan, can tell me whether such a contribution would be welcome. If you think it would, I would be punctual in my remittances; and a labour of that sort would suit me better in my present state of mind than original composition on religious subjects.

Remember us as those that love you, and are never unmindful of you.

Yours my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER XLVIII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Feb. 29, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

We are glad that you have such a Lord Petre in your neighbourhood. He must be a man of a liberal turn to employ a heretic in such a service. I wish you a further acquaintance with him, not doubting, that the more he knows you, he will find you the more agreeable. You despair of becoming a prebendary for want of certain rhyth-

mical talents, which you suppose me possessed of. But what think you of a cardinal's hat? Perhaps his Lordship may have interest at Rome, and that greater honor may await you. Seriously however, I respect his character, and should not be sorry if there were many such Papists in the land.

Mr. —— has given free scope to his generosity, and contributed as largely to the relief of Olney as he did last year. Soon after I had given you notice of his first remittance, we received a second to the same amount, accompanied indeed with an intimation, that we were to consider it as an anticipated supply, which, but for the uncommon severity of the present winter, he should have reserved for the next. The inference is, that next winter we are to expect nothing. But the man, and his beneficent turn of mind considered, there is some reason to hope, that, logical as the inference seems, it may yet be disappointed.

Adverting to your letter again, I perceive that you wish for my opinion of your answer to his Lordship. Had I forgot to tell you that I approve of it, I know you well enough to be aware of the misinterpretation you would have put upon my silence. I am glad therefore, that I happened to cast my eye

upon your appeal to my opinion, before it was too late. A modest man, however able, has always some reason to distrust himself upon extraordinary occasions. Nothing so apt to betray us into absurdity as too great a dread of it; and the application of more strength than enough is sometimes as fatal as too little: but you have escaped very well. For my own part, when I write to a stranger, I feel myself deprived of half my intellects. I suspect that I shall write nonsense, and I do so. I tremble at the thought of an inaccuracy, and become absolutely ungrammatical. I feel myself sweat. I have recourse to the knife and the pounce. I correct half a dozen blunders, which in a common case I should not have committed, and have no sooner dispatched what I have written, than I recollect how much better I could have made it; how easily and genteely I could have relaxed the stiffness of the phrase, and have cured the insufferable awkwardness of the whole, had they struck me a little earlier. Thus we stand in awe of we know not what, and miscarry through mere desire to excel.

I read Johnson's Prefaces every night, except when the news-paper calls me off. At a time like the present, what author can stand in competition

with a news-paper; or who, that has a spark of patriotism, does not point all his attention to the present crisis.

W. C.

I am so disgusted with ———, for allowing himself to be silent, when so loudly called upon to write to you, that I do not chuse to express my feelings. Woe to the man, whom kindness cannot soften!

LETTER XLIX.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

March 8, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I thank you for the two first numbers of the Theological Miscellany. I have not read them regularly through, but sufficiently to observe, that they are much indebted to Omicron. An essay, signed Parvulus, pleased me likewise; and I shall be glad, if a neighbour of ours, to whom I have lent them, should be able to apply to his own use

the lesson it inculcates. On farther consideration, I have seen reason to forego my purpose of translating Caraccioli. Though I think no book more calculated to teach the art of pious meditation, or to enforce a conviction of the vanity of all pursuits, that have not the soul's interests for their object, I can yet see a flaw in his manner of instructing, that in a country so enlightened as ours, would escape nobody's notice. Not enjoying the advantages of evangelical ordinances, and christian communion, he falls into a mistake natural in his situation, ascribing always the pleasures he found in a holy life, to his own industrious perseverance in a contemplative course, and not to the immediate agency of the great Comforter of his people, and directing the eye of his readers to a spiritual principle within, which he supposes to subsist in the soul of every man, as the source of all divine enjoyment, and not to Christ, as he would gladly have done, had he fallen under Christian teachers. Allowing for these defects, he is a charming writer, and by those, who know how to make such allowances, may be read with great delight and improvement. But with these defects in his manner, though (I believe) no man ever had a heart more devoted to God, he does not seem dressed with sufficient

exactness to be fit for the public eye, where man is known to be nothing, and Jesus all in all He must therefore be dismissed, as an unsuccessful candidate for a place in this Miscellany, and will be less mortified at being rejected in the first instance, than if he had met with a refusal from the publisher. I can only therefore repeat what I said before, that when I find a proper subject, and myself at liberty to pursue it, I will endeavour to contribute my quota.

W. C.

LETTER L.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, March 11, 1784.

I return you many thanks for your apology, which I have read with great pleasure. You know of old that your style always pleases me; and having, in a former letter, given you the reasons for which I like it, I spare you now the pain of a repetition. The spirit too, in which you write, pleases me as much. But I perceive that, in some

cases, it is possible to be severe, and at the same time perfectly good-tempered; in all cases, I suppose, where we suffer by an injurious and unreasonable attack, and can justify our conduct by a plain and simple narrative. On such occasions, truth itself seems a satire, because by implication, at least, it convicts our adversaries of the want of charity and candour. For this reason, perhaps you will find, that you have made many angry, though you are not so; and it is possible, they may be the more angry upon that very account. To assert, and to prove, that an enlightened minister of the gospel, may, without any violation of his conscience, and even upon the ground of prudence and propriety, continue in the establishment; and to do this with the most absolute composure, must be very provoking to the dignity of some dissenting doctors; and, to nettle them still the more, you in a manner impose upon them the necessity of being silent, by declaring, that you will be so yourself. Upon the whole, however, I have no doubt that your apology will do good. If it should irritate some, who have more zeal than knowledge, and more of bigotry than of either, it may serve to enlarge the views of others, and to convince them that there may be grace, truth, and efficacy, in the ministry

of a church, of which they are not members. I wish it success, and all that attention to which, both from the nature of the subject, and the manner in which you have treated it, it is so well entitled.

The patronage of the East-Indies will be a dangerous weapon, in whatever hands. I have no prospect of deliverance for this country, but the same that I have of a possibility that we may one day be disencumbered of our ruinous possessions in the East.

Our good neighbours, who have so successfully knocked away our Western crutch from under us, seem to design us the same favor on the opposite side, in which case we shall be poor, but I think we shall stand a better chance to be free; and I had rather drink water-gruel for breakfast, and be no man's slave, than wear a chain, and drink tea as usual.

I have just room to add, that we love you as usual, and are your very affectionate William and Mary,

W. C.

LETTER LI.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

March 19, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I wish it were in my power to give you any account of the Marquis Caraccioli. Some years since I saw a short history of him in the Review, of which I recollect no particulars, except that he was (and for aught I know may be still) an officer in the Prussian service. I have two volumes of his works, lent me by Lady Austen. One is upon the subject of self-acquaintance, and the other treats of the art of conversing with the same gentleman; had I pursued my purpose of translating him, my design was to have furnished myself, if possible, with some authentic account of him, which I suppose may be procured at any bookseller's who deals in foreign publications. But for the reasons given in my last I have laid aside the design. There is something in his style that touches me exceedingly, and which I do not know how to describe. I should call it pathetic if it were occasionally only, and never occurred but when his subject happened to be particularly affect-

ing. But it is universal; he has not a sentence that is not marked with it. Perhaps, therefore, I may describe it better by saying, that his whole work has an air of pious and tender melancholy, which to me at least, is extremely agreeable. This property of it, which depends perhaps altogether upon the arrangement of his words, and the modulation of his sentences, it would be very difficult to preserve in a translation. I do not know that our language is capable of being so managed, and rather suspect that it is not, and that it is peculiar to the French, because it is not unfrequent among their writers, and I never saw any thing similar to it in our own.

My evenings are devoted to books. I read aloud for the entertainment of the party, thus making amends by a vociferation of two hours for my silence at other times. We are in good health, and waiting as patiently as we can, for the end of this second winter.

Yours,

My dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER LII.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

March 29, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It being his majesty's pleasure that I should yet have another opportunity to write before he dissolves the parliament, I avail myself of it with all possible alacrity. I thank you for your last, which was not the less welcome for coming like an extraordinary gazette, at a time when it was not expected.

As when the sea is uncommonly agitated, the water finds its way into creeks and holes of rocks, which in its calmer state it never reaches, in like manner the effect of these turbulent times is felt even at Orchard-side, where in general we live as undisturbed by the political element, as shrimps or cockles that have been accidentally deposited in some hollow beyond the water mark, by the usual dashing of the waves. We were sitting yesterday after dinner, the two ladies and myself, very composedly, and without the least apprehension of any such intrusion in our snug parlour, one lady knitting, the other netting,

and the gentleman winding worsted, when to our unspeakable surprise, a mob appeared before the window; a smart rap was heard at the door, the boys halloo'd, and the maid announced Mr. ——. Puss* was unfortunately let out of her box, so that the candidate, with all his good friends at his heels, was refused admittance at the grand entry, and referred to the back door, as the only possible way of approach.

Candidates are creatures not very susceptible of affronts, and would rather, I suppose, climb in at a window, than be absolutely excluded. In a minute, the yard, the kitchen, and the parlour, were filled. Mr. G——advancing toward me, shook me by the hand with a degree of cordiality that was extremely seducing. As soon as he and as many more as could find chairs were seated, he began to open the intent of his visit. I told him I had no vote, for which he readily gave me credit. I assured him I had no influence, which he was not equally inclined to believe, and the less, no doubt, because Mr. A—— addressing himself to me at that moment, informed me that I had a great deal. Supposing that I could

* His tame hare.

not be possessed of such a treasure without knowing it, I ventured to confirm my first assertion, by saying, that if I had any, I was utterly at a loss to imagine where it could be, or wherein it consisted. Thus ended the conference. Mr. G——— squeezed me by the hand again, kissed the ladies and withdrew. He kissed likewise the maid in the kitchen, and seemed upon the whole, a most loving, kissing, kind-hearted gentleman. He is very young, genteel, and handsome. He has a pair of very good eyes in his head, which not being sufficient as it should seem for the many nice and difficult purposes of a senator, he has a third also, which he wore suspended by a ribband from his button-hole. The boys halloo'd, the dogs bark'd, puss scampered, the hero with his long train of obsequious followers, withdrew. We made ourselves very merry with the adventure, and in a short time settled into our former tranquillity, never probably to be thus interrupted more; I thought myself however happy in being able to affirm truly, that I had not that influence for which he sued, and which had I been possessed of it, with my present views of the dispute between the Crown and the Commons, I must have refused him, for he is on the side of the for-

mer. It is comfortable to be of no consequence in a world, where one cannot exercise any without disobliging somebody. The town however seems to be much at his service, and if he be equally successful throughout the county, he will undoubtedly gain his election. Mr. A——, perhaps, was a little mortified, because it was evident that I owed the honor of this visit to his misrepresentation of my importance. But had he thought proper to assure Mr. G——that I had three heads, I should not, I suppose, have been bound to produce them.

Mr. S———, who you say was so much admired in your pulpit, would be equally admired in his own, at least by all capable judges, were he not so apt to be angry with his congregration. This hurts him, and had he the understanding and eloquence of Paul himself, would still hurt him. He seldom, hardly ever indeed, preaches a gentle, well-tempered sermon, but I hear it highly commended: but warmth of temper, indulged to a degree that may be called scolding, defeats the end of preaching. It is a misapplication of his powers, which it also cripples, and teizes away his hearers. But he is a good man, and may perhaps out-grow it.

W. C.

LETTER LIII.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

April, 1784.

People that are but little acquainted with the terrors of divine wrath, are not much afraid of trifling with their Maker. But for my own part, I would sooner take Empedocles's leap and fling myself into mount Ætna than I would do it in the slightest instance, were I in circumstances to make an election. In the scripture we find a broad and clear exhibition of mercy, it is displayed in every page. Wrath is in comparison but slightly touched upon, because it is not so much a discovery of wrath as of forgiveness. But had the displeasure of God been the principal subject of the book, and had it circumstantially set forth that measure of it only, which may be endured even in this life, the Christian world, perhaps, would have been less comfortable; but I believe presumptuous medlers with the gospel would have been less frequently met with.——'The word is a flaming sword; and he that touches it with unhallowed fingers, thinking to make a tool of it, will find, that he has burnt them.'

What havock in Calabria! every house is built upon the sand, whose inhabitants have no God, or only a false one. Solid and fluid are such in respect to each other: but with reference to the divine power they are equally fixed, or equally unstable. The inhabitants of a rock shall sink, while a cock-boat shall save a man alive in the midst of the fathomless ocean. The Pope grants dispensations for folly and madness during the carnival. But it seems they are as offensive to him, whose vicegerent he pretends himself, at that season as at any other. Were I a Calabrian, I would not give my papa at Rome one farthing for his amplest indulgence, for this time forth for ever. There is a word, that makes this world tremble; and the Pope cannot countermand it. A fig for such a conjurer! Pharaoh's conjurers had twice his ability.

Believe me,

My dear friend,

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

LETTER LIV.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

April 5, 1781.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I thanked you in my last for Johnson, I now thank you, with more emphasis, for Beattie, the most agreeable and amiable writer I ever met with. The only author I have seen whose critical and philosophical researches are diversified and embellished by a poetical imagination, that makes even the driest subject, and the leanest, a feast for an epicure in books. He is so much at his ease too, that his own character appears in every page, and which is very rare, we see not only the writer, but the man: and that man so gentle, so well tempered, so happy in his religion, and so humane in his philosophy, that it is necessary to love him if one has any sense of what is lovely. If you have not his poem called the minstrel, and cannot borrow it, I must beg you to buy it for me; for though I cannot afford to deal largely in so expensive a commodity as books, I must afford to purchase at least the poetical works of Beattie. I have read six of Blair's Lectures, and

what do I say of Blair? That he is a sensible man, master of his subject, and excepting here and there a Scotticism, a good writer, so far at least as perspicuity of expression, and method, contribute to make one. But Oh the sterility of that man's fancy! if indeed he has any such faculty belonging to him. Perhaps philosophers, or men designed for such, are sometimes born without one; or perhaps it withers for want of exercise. However that may be, Doctor Blair has such a brain as Shakespear somewhere describes ——— "dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage."

I take it for granted, that these good men are philosophically correct (for they are both agreed upon the subject) in their account of the origin of language; and if the Scripture had left us in the dark upon that article, I should very readily adopt their hypothesis for want of better information. I should suppose for instance, that man made his first effort in speech, in the way of an interjection, and that ah, or oh, being uttered with wonderful gesticulation, and variety of attitude, must have left his powers of expression quite exhausted: that in a course of time he would invent many names for many things, but first for the objects of his daily wants. An apple

would consequently be called an apple, and perhaps not many years would elapse before the appellation would receive the sanction of general use. In this case, and upon this supposition, seeing one in the hand of another man, he would exclaim with a most moving pathos, "Oh apple!"——well and good—— oh apple! is a very affecting speech, but in the mean time it profits him nothing. The man that holds it, eats it; and *he* goes away with Oh apple in his mouth, and with nothing better. Reflecting on his disappointment, and that perhaps it arose from his not being more explicit, he contrives a term to denote his idea of transfer or gratuitous communication, and the next occasion, that offers of a similar kind, performs his part accordingly. His speech now stands thus, "Oh give apple!" The apple-holder perceives himself called upon to part with his fruit, and, having satisfied his own hunger, is perhaps not unwilling to do so. But unfortunately there is still room for a mistake, and, a third person being present, he gives the apple to *him*. Again disappointed, and again perceiving that his language has not all the precision that is requisite, the orator retires to his study, and there after much deep thinking, conceives that the insertion of a pronoun, whose office shall be to signify

that he not only wants the apple to be given, but given to himself, will remedy all defects, he uses it the next opportunity, and succeeds to a wonder, obtains the apple and by his success such credit to his invention, that pronouns continue to be in great repute ever after.

Now as my two syllable-mongers, Beattie and Blair, both agree that language was originally inspired, and that the great variety of languages we find upon earth at present, took its rise from the confusion of tongues at Babel, I am not perfectly convinced that there is any just occasion to invent this very ingenious solution of a difficulty, which Scripture has solved already. My opinion however is, if I may presume to have an opinion of my own, so different from theirs, who are so much wiser than myself, that if man had been his own teacher, and had acquired his words and his phrases only as necessity or convenience had prompted, his progress must have been considerably slower than it was, and in Homer's days the production of such a poem as the Iliad impossible. On the contrary, I doubt not Adam on the very day of his creation, was able to express himself in terms both forcible and elegant, and that he was at no loss for

sublime diction, and logical combination, when he wanted to praise his Maker.

Yours,

My dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER LV.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

April 25, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I wish I had both burning words, and bright thoughts. But I have at present neither. My head is not itself. Having had an unpleasant night, and a melancholy day, and having already written a long letter, I do not find myself in point of spirits at all qualified either to burn or shine. The post sets out early on Tuesday. The morning is the only time of exercise with me. In order therefore to keep it open for that purpose, and to comply with your desire of an immediate answer, I give you as much as I can spare of the present evening.

Since I dispatched my last, Blair has crept a little farther into my favor. As his subjects improve, he improves with them; but upon the whole I account him a dry writer, useful no doubt as an instructor, but as little entertaining, as with so much knowledge, it is possible to be. His language is (except Swift's) the least figurative I remember to have seen, and the few figures found in it are not always happily employed. I take him to be a critic very little animated by what he reads, who rather reasons about the beauties of an author than really tastes them, and who finds that a passage is praise-worthy, not because it charms him, but because it is accommodated to the laws of criticism, in that case made and provided. I have a little complied with your desire of marginal annotations, and should have dealt in them more largely, had I read the books to myself; but being reader to the ladies, I have not always time to settle my own opinion of a doubtful expression, much less to suggest an amendation. I have not censured a particular observation in the book, though when I met with it, it displeased me: I this moment recollect it, and may as well therefore note it here. He is commending, and deservedly, that most noble de-

scription of a thunder-storm in the first Georgic, which ends with

Ingeminant austri et densissimus imber.

Being in haste, I do not refer to the volume for his very words, but my memory will serve me with the matter. When poets describe, he says, they should always select such circumstances of the subject as are least obvious and therefore most striking. He therefore admires the effects of the thunder-bolt splitting mountains, and filling a nation with astonishment, but quarrels with the closing member of the period, as containing particulars of a storm not worthy of Virgil's notice, because obvious to the notice of all. But here I differ from him; not being able to conceive that wind and rain can be improper in the description of a tempest, or how wind and rain could possibly be more poetically described. Virgil is indeed remarkable for finishing his periods well, and never comes to a stop but with the most consummate dignity of numbers and expression, and in the instance in question, I think his skill in this respect is remarkably displayed. The line is perfectly majestic in its march. As to the wind, it is such only as the

word *ingeminant* could describe, and the words *denissimus imber* give one an idea of a shower indeed, but of such a shower as is not very common, and such a one as only Virgil could have done justice to by a single epithet. Far therefore from agreeing with the Doctor in his stricture, I do not think the Æneid contains a nobler line, or a description more magnificently finished.

We are glad that Dr. C—— has singled you out upon this occasion. Your performance we doubt not will justify his choice: fear not—you have a heart that can feel upon charitable occasions, and therefore will not fail you upon this. The burning words will come fast enough, when the sensibility is such as yours.

Yours,

My dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER LVI.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

April 26, 1784.

We are glad that your book runs. It will not indeed satisfy those whom nothing could satisfy but your accession to their party; but the liberal will say you do well, and it is in the opinion of such men only that you can feel yourself interested.

I have lately been employed in reading Beattie and Blair's Lectures. The latter I have not yet finished. I find the former the most agreeable of the two, indeed the most entertaining writer upon dry subjects that I ever met with. His imagination is highly poetical, his language easy and elegant, and his manner so familiar, that we seem to be conversing with an old friend, upon terms of the most sociable intercourse, while we read him. Blair is on the contrary rather stiff, not that his style is pedantic, but his air is formal. He is a sensible man, and understands his subjects, but too conscious that he is addressing the public, and too solicitous about his success to indulge

himself for a moment in that play of fancy, which makes the other so agreeable. In Blair we find a scholar, in Beattie both a scholar and an amiable man, indeed so amiable, that I have wished for his acquaintance ever since I read his book. Having never in my life perused a page of Aristotle, I am glad to have had an opportunity of learning more than (I suppose) he would have taught me, from the writings of two modern critics. I felt myself too a little disposed to compliment my own acumen upon the occasion. For though the art of writing and composing was never much my study, I did not find that they had any great news to tell me. They have assisted me in putting my observations into some method, but have not suggested many, of which I was not by some means or other previously apprized. In fact, critics did not originally beget authors. But authors made critics. Common sense dictated to writers the necessity of method, connexion, and thoughts congruous to the nature of their subject; genius prompted them with embellishments, and then came the critics. Observing the good effects of an attention to these items, they enacted laws for the observance of them in time to come, and, having drawn their rules for good writing, from what was actually well written,

boasted themselves the inventors of an art, which yet the authors of the day had already exemplified.—They are however useful in their way, giving us at one view a map of the boundaries, which propriety sets to fancy, and serving as judges, to whom the public may at once appeal, when pestered with the vagaries of those, who have had the hardiness to transgress them.

The candidates for this county have set an example of œconomy, which other candidates would do well to follow, having come to an agreement on both sides to defray the expences of their voters, but to open no houses for the entertainment of the rabble; a reform however, which the rabble did not at all approve of, and testified their dislike of it by a riot. A stage was built, from which the orators had designed to harangue the electors. This became the first victim of their fury. Having very little curiosity to hear what gentlemen could say, who would give them nothing better than words, they broke it in pieces, and threw the fragments upon the hustings. The sheriff, the members, the lawyers, the voters, were instantly put to flight. They rallied, but were again routed by a second assault, like the former. They then proceeded to break the windows of the inn, to which

they had fled; and, a fear prevailing, that at night they would fire the town, a proposal was made by the freeholders to face about, and endeavour to secure them. At that instant, a rioter, dressed in a merry Andrew's jacket, stepped forward, and challenged the best man among them. Olney sent the hero to the field, who made him repent of his presumption. Mr. A——— was he. Seizing him by the throat he shook him—he threw him to the earth he made the hollowness of his scull resound by the application of his fists, and dragged him into custody without the least damage to his person.——Animated by this example, the other freeholders followed it: and in five minutes, twenty-eight out of thirty, ragamuffins, were safely lodged in goal.

Adieu,

My dear friend,

We love you,

And are yours,

W. & M.

LETTER LVII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

May 3, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The subject of face-painting may be considered (I think) in two points of view. First there is room for dispute with respect to the consistency of the practice with good morals; and secondly, whether it be on the whole convenient or not, may be a matter worthy of agitation. I set out with all the formality of logical disquisition, but do not promise to observe the same regularity any farther than it may comport with my purpose of writing as fast as I can.

As to the immorality of the custom, were I in France, I should see none. On the contrary, it seems in that country, to be a symptom of modest consciousness, and a tacit confession of what all know to be true, that French faces have in fact neither red nor white of their own. This humble acknowledgment of a defect looks the more like a virtue, being found among a people not remarkable for humility. Again, before we can prove the practice to be immoral, we

must prove immorality in the design of those who use it; either that they intend a deception, or to kindle unlawful desires in the beholders. But the French ladies, so far as their purpose comes in question, must be acquitted of both these charges. Nobody supposes their colour to be natural for a moment, any more than if it were blue or green: and this unambiguous judgment of the matter is owing to two causes: first, to the universal knowledge we have, that French women are naturally brown or yellow, with very few exceptions, and secondly to the inartificial manner, in which they paint: for they do not, as I am satisfactorily informed, even attempt an imitation of nature but besmear themselves hastily, and at a venture, anxious only to lay on enough. Where therefore there is no wanton intention, nor a wish to deceive, I can discover no immorality. But in England (I am afraid) our painted ladies are not clearly entitled to the same apology. They even imitate nature with such exactness, that the whole public is sometimes divided into parties, who litigate with great warmth the question, whether painted or not? this was remarkably the case with a Miss B———, whom I well remember. Her roses and lilies were never discovered to be spurious, till she attained an

age, that made the supposition of their being natural impossible. This anxiety to be not merely red and white, which is all they aim at in France, but to be thought very beautiful, and much more beautiful than nature has made them, is a symptom not very favorable to the idea we would wish to entertain of the chastity, purity, and modesty of our country-women. That they are guilty of a design to deceive, is certain. Otherwise why so much art; and if to deceive, wherefore and with what purpose? Certainly either to gratify vanity of the silliest kind, or, which is still more criminal, to decoy and inveigle, and carry on more successfully the business of temptation. Here therefore my opinion splits itself into two oppositse sides upon the same question. I can suppose a French woman, though painted an inch deep, to be a virtuous, discreet, excellent character, and in no instance should I think the worse of one, because she was painted. But an English belle must pardon me, if I have not the same charity for her. She is at least an impostor, whether she cheats me or not, because she means to do so; and it is well, if that be all the censure she deserves.

This brings me to my second class of ideas upon this topic: and here I feel that I should be fearfully

puzzled were I called upon to recommend the practice on the score of convenience. If a husband chose that his wife should paint, perhaps it might be her duty, as well as her interest, to comply. But I think he would not much consult his own, for reasons that will follow. In the first place, she would admire herself the more; and in the next, if she managed the matter well, she might be more admired by others; an acquisition that might bring her virtue under trials, to which otherwise it might never have been exposed. In no other case however can I imagine the practice in this country to be either expedient or convenient. As a general one, it certainly is not expedient, because in general English women have no occasion for it. A swarthy complexion is a rarity here, and the sex, especially since inoculation has been so much in use, have very little cause to complain that nature has not been kind to them in the article of complexion. They may hide and spoil a good one, but they cannot (at least they hardly can) give themselves a better. But even if they could, there is yet a tragedy in the sequel, which should make them tremble. I understand that in France, though the use of rouge be general, the use of white paint is far from

being so. In England, she that uses one, commonly uses both. Now all white paints, or lotions, or whatever they be called, are mercurial, consequently poisonous, consequently ruinous in time to the constitution. The Miss B—— above mentioned, was a miserable witness of the truth, it being certain, that her flesh fell from her bones before she died. Lady C— was hardly a less melancholy proof of it; and a London physician perhaps, were he at liberty to blab, could publish a bill of female mortality, of a length that would astonish us.

For these reasons, I utterly condemn the practice, as it obtains in England: and for a reason superior to all these, I must disapprove it. I cannot indeed discover that Scripture forbids it in so many words. But that anxious solicitude about the person, which such an artifice evidently betrays, is I am sure, contrary to the tenor and spirit of it throughout. Show me a woman with a painted face, and I will show you a woman whose heart is set on things of the earth, and not on things above. But this observation of mine applies to it only when it is an imitative art. For in the use of French women, I think it as innocent as in the use of the wild Indian, who draws a circle round her face and makes two spots,

perhaps blue, perhaps white, in the middle of it. Such are my thoughts upon the matter.

Vive valeque.

Yours,

My dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER LVIII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

May 8, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND.

You do well to make your letters merry ones, though not very merry yourself, and that both for my sake and your own; for your own sake, because it sometimes happens that by assuming an air of cheerfulness, we become cheerful in reality; and for mine, because I have always more need of a laugh than a cry, being somewhat disposed to melancholy by natural temperament, as well as by other causes.

It was long since, and even in the infancy of

John Gilpin, recommended to me by a lady now at Bristol, to write a sequel. But having always observed, that authors, elated with the success of a first part, have fallen below themselves, when they have attempted a second, I had more prudence than to take her counsel. I want you to read the history of that hero, published by Bladon, and to tell me what it is made of. But buy it not. For, puffed as it is in the papers, it can be but a bookseller's job, and must be dear at the price of two shillings. In the last pacquet but one that I received from Johnson, he asked me if I had any improvements of John Gilpin in hand, or if I designed any; for that to print only the original again, would be to publish what has been hacknied in every magazine, in every newspaper, and in every street. I answered, that the copy which I sent him contained two or three small variations from the first, except which I had none to propose, and if he thought him now too trite to make a part of my volume, I should willingly acquiesce in his judgment. I take it for granted therefore, that he will not bring up the rear of my Poems according to my first intention, and shall not be sorry for the omission. It may spring from a principle of pride; but spring from what it

may, I feel, and have long felt, a disinclination to a public avowal that he is mine; and since he became so popular, I have felt it more than ever, not that I should have expressed a scruple, if Johnson had not. But a fear has suggested itself to me, that I might expose myself to a charge of vanity by admitting him into my book, and that some people would impute it to me as a crime. Consider what the world is made of, and you will not find my suspicions chimerical. Add to this, that when on correcting the latter part of the fifth book of the Task, I came to consider the solemnity and sacred nature of the subjects there handled, it seemed to me an incongruity at the least, not to call it by a harsher name, to follow up such premises with such a conclusion. I am well content therefore with having laughed, and made others laugh, and will build my hopes of success, as a poet, upon more important matter.

In our printing business we now jog on merrily enough. The coming week will, I hope, bring me to an end of the Task, and the next fortnight to an end of the whole. I am glad to have Paley on my side in the affair of education. He is certainly on all subjects a sensible man, and on such, a wise one. But I am mistaken, if Tirocinium do not make some of

my friends angry, and procure me enemies not a few. There is a sting in verse that prose neither has, nor can have; and I do not know, that schools in the gross, and especially public schools, have ever been so pointedly condemned before. But they are become a nuisance, a pest, an abomination, and it is fit that the eyes and noses of mankind should, if possible, be opened to perceive it.

This is indeed an author's letter; but it is an author's letter to his friend. If you will be the friend of an author, you must expect such letters. Come July, and come yourself, with as many of your exterior selves as can possibly come with you!

Yours, my dear William, affectionately, and with your Mother's remembrances.

Adieu,

W. C.

LETTER LIX.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

May 22, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am glad to have received at last, an account of Dr. Johnson's favorable opinion of my book. I thought it wanting, and had long since concluded that not having had the happiness to please him, I owed my ignorance of his sentiments to the tenderness of my friends at Hoxton, who would not mortify me with an account of his disapprobation. It occurs to me that I owe him thanks for interposing between me, and the resentment of the Reviewers, who seldom shew mercy to an advocate for evangelical truth, whether in prose or verse. I therefore inclose a short acknowledgment, which, if you see no impropriety in the measure, you can, I imagine, without much difficulty, convey to him through the hands of Mr. Latrobe. If on any account you judge it an inexpedient step, you can very easily suppress the letter.

I pity Mr. Bull. What harder task can any man undertake than the management of those, who have

reached the age of manhood without having ever felt the force of authority, or passed through any of the preparatory parts of education? I had either forgot or never adverted to the circumstance, that his disciples were to be men. At present, however, I am not surprised, that being such, they are found disobedient, untractable, insolent, and conceited; qualities, that generally prevail in the minds of adults in exact proportion to their ignorance. He dined with us, since I received your last. It was on Thursday that he was here. He came dejected, burthened, full of complaints. But we sent him away cheerful. He is very sensible of the prudence, delicacy, and attention to his character, which the society have discovered in their conduct towards him upon this occasion; and indeed it does them honor; for it were past all enduring, if a charge of insufficiency should obtain a moments regard, when brought by five such coxcombs against a man of his erudition and ability. Lady Austen is gone to Bath.

Yours,

My dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER LX.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

June 25, 1784.

When you told me that the critique upon my volume was written, though not by Doctor Johnson himself, yet by a friend of his, to whom he recommended the book, and the business, I inferred from that expression, that I was indebted to him for an active interposition in my favor, and consequently that he had a right to thanks. But now I concur entirely in sentiment with you, and heartily second your vote for the suppression of thanks, which do not seem to be much called for. Yet even now were it possible that I could fall into his company, I should not think a slight acknowledgment misapplied. I was no otherway anxious about his opinion, nor could be so, after you and some others, had given a favorable one, than it was natural I should be, knowing, as I did, that his opinion had been consulted.

I am affectionately yours,

W. C.

LETTER LXI.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 3, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

We rejoice that you had a safe journey, and though we should have rejoiced still more had you had no occasion for a physician, we are glad that having had need of one, you had the good fortune to find him——let us hear soon that his advice has proved effectual, and that you are delivered from all ill symptoms.

Thanks for the care you have taken to furnish me with a dictionary, it is rather strange that at my time of life, and after a youth spent in classical pursuits, I should want one, and stranger still, that being possessed at present of only one Latin author in the world, I should think it worth while to purchase one. I say that it is strange, and indeed I think it so myself. But I have a thought that when my present labours of the pen are ended, I may go to school again, and refresh my spirits by a little intercourse with the Mantuan and the Sabine bard, and perhaps by a perusal of some others, whose works we generally lay.

by at that period of life, when we are best qualified to read them, when the judgment and the taste being formed, their beauties are least likely to be overlooked.

This change of wind and weather comforts me, and I should have enjoyed the first fine morning I have seen this month with a peculiar relish, if our new tax-maker had not put me out of temper. I am angry with him, not only for the matter, but for the manner of his proposal. When he lays his impost upon horses he is jocular, and laughs, though considering that wheels and miles, and grooms, were taxed before, a graver countenance upon the occasion would have been more decent. But he provoked me still more by reasoning as he does on the justification of the tax upon candles. Some families, he says, will suffer little by it.—Why? because they are so poor, that they cannot afford themselves more than ten pounds in the year. Excellent! They can use but few, therefore they will pay but little, and consequently will be but little burthened, an argument which for its cruelty and effrontery, seems worthy of a hero——but he does not avail himself of the whole force of it, nor with all his wisdom, had sagacity enough to see that it contains, when pushed to

its utmost extent, a free discharge and acquittal of the poor from the payment of any tax at all, a commodity being once made too expensive for their pockets, will cost them nothing, for they will not buy it. Rejoice therefore, Oh ye penny-less! the minister will indeed send you to bed in the dark, but your remaining half-penny will be safe, instead of being spent in the useless luxury of candle-light, it will buy you a roll for breakfast, which you will eat no doubt with gratitude to the man, who so kindly lessens the number of your disbursements, and while he seems to threaten your money, saves it. I wish he would remember, that the half-penny which government imposes, the shopkeeper will swell to twopence. I wish he would visit the miserable huts of our Lace-makers at Olney, and see them working in the winter-months, by the light of a farthing candle, from four in the afternoon till midnight: I wish he had laid his tax upon the ten thousand lamps that illuminate the Pantheon, upon the flambeaux that wait upon ten thousand chariots and sedans, in an evening, and upon the wax candles that give light to ten thousand card tables. I wish, in short, that he would consider the pockets of the poor as sacred, and that to tax a people already so necessitous, is but

to discourage the little industry that is left among us, by driving the labourious to despair.

A neighbour of mine, in Silver-end, keeps an ass, the ass lives on the other side of the garden-wall, and I am writing in the green-house: it happens that he is this morning most musically disposed, whether cheered by the fine weather, or by some new tune which he has just acquired, or by finding his voice more harmonious than usual. It would be cruel to mortify so fine a singer, therefore I do not tell him that he interrupts, and hinders me, but I venture to tell you so, and to plead his performance in excuse for my abrupt conclusion.

I send you the goldfinches, with which you will do as you see good. We have an affectionate remembrance of your late visit, and of all our friends at Stock.

Believe me,

Ever yours,

W. C.

LETTER LXII.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

July 5, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

A dearth of materials, a consciousness that my subjects are for the most part, and must be uninteresting and unimportant, but above all, a poverty of animal spirits, that makes writing much a great fatigue to me, have occasioned my choice of smaller paper. Acquiesce in the justness of these reasons for the present; and if ever the times should mend with me, I sincerely promise to amend with them.

Homer says on a certain occasion, that Jupiter, when he was wanted at home, was gone to partake of an entertainment provided for him by the Æthiopians. If by Jupiter we understand the weather, or the season, as the ancients frequently did, we may say, that our English Jupiter has been absent on account of some such invitation: during the whole month of June he left us to experience almost the rigours of winter. This fine day, however, affords us some hope that the feast is ended, and that we shall enjoy

his company without the interference of his Æthiopian friends again.

Is it possible that the wise men of antiquity could entertain a real reverence for the fabulous rubbish which they dignified with the name of religion? We, who have been favored from our infancy with so clear a light, are perhaps hardly competent to decide the question, and may strive in vain to imagine the absurdities, that even a good understanding may receive as truths, when totally unaided by revelation. It seems however, that men, whose conceptions upon other subjects were often sublime, whose reasoning powers were undoubtedly equal to our own, and whose management in matters of jurisprudence, that required a very industrious examination of evidence, was as acute and subtle as that of a modern Attorney-general, could not be the dupes of such imposture, as a child among us would detect and laugh at. Juvenal, I remember, introduces one of his Satires with an observation, that there were some in his day who had the hardiness to laugh at the stories of Tartarus and Styx, and Charon, and of the frogs that croak upon the banks of Lethe, giving his reader, at the same time cause to suspect, that he was himself one of that profane number. Horace, on the other hand,

declares in sober sadness, that he would not for all the world get into a boat with a man who had divulged the Eleusinian mysteries. Yet we know, that those mysteries, whatever they might be, were altogether as unworthy to be esteemed divine, as the mythology of the vulgar. How then must we determine? If Horace were a good and orthodox Heathen, how came Juvenal to be such an ungracious libertine in principle, as to ridicule the doctrines which the other held as sacred? Their opportunities of information, and their mental advantages were equal, I feel myself rather inclined to believe, that Juvenal's avowed infidelity was sincere, and that Horace was no better than a canting hypocritical professor.

You must grant me a dispensation for saying any thing, whether it be sense, or nonsense, upon the subject of politics. It is truly a matter, in which I am so little interested, that were it not that it sometimes serves me for a theme, when I can find no other, I should never mention it. I would forfeit a large sum, if after advertizing a month in the gazette, the minister of the day, whoever he may be, could discover a man that cares about him or his measures, so little as I do. When I say, that I would forfeit a large sum, I mean to have it understood, that I would forfeit

such a sum, if I had it. If Mr. Pitt be indeed a virtuous man as such I respect him. But at the best, I fear, that he will have to say at last with Æneas,

Si Pergama dextrâ
Defendi possent, etiàm hâc defensa fuissent.

Be he what he may, I do not like his taxes. At least I am much disposed to quarrel with some of them. The additional duty upon candles, by which the poor will be much affected, hurts me most. He says, indeed, that they will but little feel it, because even now they can hardly afford the use of them. He had certainly put no compassion into his budget, when he produced from it this tax, and such an argument to support it. Justly translated it seems to amount to this—"Make "the necessaries of life too expensive for the poor to "reach them, and you will save their money. If they "buy but few candles, they will pay but little tax; "and if they buy none, the tax, as to them, will be "annihilated." True. But, in the mean time, they will break their shins against their furniture, if they have any, and will be but little the richer, when the hours, in which they might work, if they could see, shall be deducted.

I have bought a great dictionary, and want nothing but Latin authors, to furnish me with the use of it Had I purchased them first, I had begun at the right end. But I could not afford it. I beseech you admire my prudence.

Vale, valete, et mementote nostrûm.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

LETTER LXIII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 12, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I think with you that Vinny's line is not pure. If he knew any authority that would have justified his substitution of a participle for a substantive, he would have done well to have noted it in the margin. But I am much inclined to think that he did not. Poets are sometimes exposed to difficulties, insurmountable by lawful means,

whence I imagine was originally derived that indulgence, that allows them the use of what is called the *poetica licentia*. But that liberty, I believe, contents itself with the abbreviation or protraction of a word, or an alteration in [illegible] and never presumes to [illegible] propriety. I have dared to attempt to correct my master, but am not bold enough to say that I have succeeded. Neither am I sure that my memory serves me correctly with the line that follows; but when I recollect the English, am persuaded that it cannot differ much from the true one. This therefore is my edition of the passage—

Basia amatori tot tum permissa beato

Or,

Bassia quæ juveni indulsit Susanna beato
Navarcha optaret-maximus esse sua.

The preceding lines I have utterly forgotten, and am consequently at a loss to know whether the distich, thus managed, will connect itself with them easily, and as it ought.

We thank you for the drawing of your house. I never knew my idea of what I had never seen, resemble the original so much. At some time or other you have doubtless given me an exact account of it, and I have retained the faithful impression made by your description. It is a comfortable abode, and the time I hope will come, when I shall enjoy more than the mere representation of it.

I have not yet read the last Review, but dipping into it, I accidently fell upon their account of Hume's Essay on Suicide. I am glad that they have liberality enough to condemn the licentiousness of an author, whom they so much admire. I say liberality, for there is as much bigotry in the world to that man's errors, as there is in the hearts of some sectaries to their peculiar modes and tenets. He is the Pope of thousands,as blind and presumptuous as himself. God certainly infatuates those, who will not see. It were otherwise impossible that a man,naturally shrewd and sensible, and whose understanding has had all the advantages of constant exercise and cultivation, could have satisfied himself, or have hoped to satisfy others with such palpable sophistry,as has not even the grace of fallacy to recommend it. His silly assertion, that because it would be no sin to divert the course of the

Danube, therefore it is none to let out a few ounces of blood from an artery, would justify not suicide only, but homicide also. For the lives of ten thousand men are of less consequence to their country, than the course of that river to the regions through which it flows. Population would soon make society amends for the loss of her ten thousand members, but the loss of the Danube would be felt by all the millions, that dwell upon its banks, to all generations. But the life of a man, and the water of a river, can never come into competition with each other in point of value, unless in the estimation of an unprincipled philosopher.

I thank you for your offer of the classics. When I want I will borrow. Horace is my own. Homer, with a clavis, I have had possession of some years. They are the property of Mr. Jones. A Virgil, the property of Mr. S——, I have had as long. I am nobody in the affair of tenses, unless when you are present.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER LXIV.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

July 19, 1784.

In those days when Bedlam was open to the cruel curiosity of holiday ramblers, I have been a visitor there. Though a boy, I was not altogether insensible of the misery of the poor captives, nor destitute of feeling for them. But the madness of some of them had such an humourous air, and displayed itself in so many whimsical freaks, that it was impossible not to be entertained, at the same time that I was angry with myself for being so. A line of Bourne's is very expressive of the spectacle which this world exhibits, tragi-comical as the incidents of it are, absurd in themselves, but terrible in their consequences;

Sunt res humanæ flebile ludibrium.

An instance of this deplorable merriment has occurred in the course of the last week at Olney. A feast gave the occasion to a catastrophe truly shocking.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER LXV.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

July 23, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I may perhaps be short, but am not willing that you should go to Lymington without first having had a line from me. I know that place well, having spent six weeks there, above twenty years ago. The town is neat, and the country delightful. You walk well, and will consequently find a part of the coast, called Hall-Cliff, within the reach of your ten toes. It was a favorite walk of mine; to the best of my remembrance, about three miles distant from Lymington. There you may stand upon the beach, and contemplate the Needle-rock. At least you might have done so twenty years ago. But since that time, I think, it is fallen from its base, and is drowned, and is no longer a visible object of contemplation. I wish you may pass your time there happily, as in all probability you will, perhaps usefully too to others, undoubtedly so to yourself.

The manner in which you have been previously made acquainted with Mr. Gilpin, gives a proviclen-

tial air to your journey, and affords reason to hope, that you may be charged with a message to him. I admire him, as a biographer. But as Mrs. Unwin and I were talking of him last night, we could not but wonder that a man should see so much excellence in the lives, and so much glory and beauty in the death of the martyrs, whom he has recorded, and at the same time disapprove the principles, that produced the very conduct he admired. It seems however a step towards the truth to applaud the fruits of it; and one cannot help thinking, that one step more would put him in possession of the truth itself. By your means may he be enabled to take it!

We are obliged to you for the preference you would have given to Olney, had not providence determined your course another way. But as, when we saw you last summer, you gave us no reason to expect you this, we are the less disappointed. At your age and mine, biennial visits have such a gap between them, that we cannot promise ourselves upon those terms very numerous future interviews. But, whether ours are to be many or few, you will always be welcome to me, for the sake of the comfortable days that are past. In my present state of mind, my friendship for you indeed is as warm as

ever. But I feel myself very indifferently qualified to be your companion. Other days than these inglorious and unprofitable ones, are promised me, and when I see them, I shall rejoice.

I saw the advertisement of your adversary's book. He is happy at least in this, that, whether he have brains or none, he strikes without the danger of being stricken again. He could not wish to engage in a controversy upon easier terms. The other, whose publication is postponed till Christmas, is resolved, I suppose to do something. But do what he will, he cannot prove, that you have not been aspersed, or that you have not refuted the charge; which, unless he can do; I think he will do little to the purpose.

Mrs. Unwin thinks of you, and always with a grateful recollection of your's, and Mrs. Newton's kindness. She has had a nervous fever lately. But I hope she is better. The weather forbids walking, a prohibition hurtful to us both.

We heartily wish you a good journey, and are affectionately yours,

W. C. & M. U.

LETTER LXVI.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

August 11, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I give you joy of a journey performed without trouble or danger. You have travelled five hundred miles without having encountered either. Some neighbours of ours, about a fortnight since, made an excursion only to a neighbouring village, and brought home with them fractured sculls, and broken limbs, and one of them is dead. For my own part, I seem pretty much exempted from the dangers of the road. Thanks to that tender interest and concern, which the legislature takes in my security! Having no doubt their fears lest so precious a life should determine too soon, and by some untimely stroke of misadventure; they have made wheels and horses so expensive, that I am not likely to owe my death to either.

Your mother and I continue to visit Weston daily, and find in those agreeable bowers, such amusement, as leaves us but little room to regret,

that we can go no farther. Having touched that theme, I cannot abstain from the pleasure of telling you, that our neighbours in that place, being about to leave it for some time, and meeting us there but a few evenings before their departure, entreated us during their absence, to consider the garden, and all its contents, as our own, and to gather whatever we liked, without the least scruple. We accordingly picked strawberries as often as we went, and brought home as many bundles of honey-suckles as served to perfume our dwelling till they returned.

Once more, by the aid of Lord Dartmouth, I find myself a voyager in the Pacific ocean. In our last night's lecture we made our acquaintance with the island of Hapaee, where we had never been before. The French and Italians, it seems, have but little cause to plume themselves on account of their achievements in the dancing way; and we may hereafter, without much repining at it, acknowledge their superiority in that art. They are equalled, perhaps excelled by savages. How wonderful, that without any intercourse with a politer world, and having made no proficiency in any other accomplishment, they should in this however have made themselves such adepts, that for regularity and grace of motion,

they might even be our masters. How wonderful too, that with a tub, and a stick, they should be able to produce such harmony, as persons accustomed to the sweetest music, cannot but hear with pleasure. Is it not very difficult to account for the striking difference of character, that obtains among the inhabitants of these islands? Many of them are near neighbours to each other. Their opportunities of improvement much the same; yet some of them are in a degree polite, discover symptoms of taste, and have a sense of elegance; while others are as rude as we naturally expect to find a people, who have never had any communication with the northern hemisphere. These volumes furnish much matter of philophical speculation, and often entertain me, even while I am not employed in reading them.

I am sorry you have not been able to ascertain the doubtful intelligence I have received on the subject of cork skirts, and bosoms. I am now every day occupied in giving all the grace I can, to my new production, and in transcribing it; I shall soon arrive at the passage that censures that folly, which I shall be loth to expunge, but which I must not spare, unless the criminals can be convicted. The world however, is not so unproductive of subjects of

censure, but that it may probably supply me with some other that may serve as well.

If you know any body that is writing, or intends to write, an epic poem on the new regulation of *franks*, you may give him my compliments, and these two lines for a beginning——

Heu quot amatores nunc torquet epistola rara!
Vectigal certum, perituraque gratia FRANKI!

Yours faithfully,

W. C.

LETTER LXVII.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

August 16, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Had you not expressed a desire to hear from me before you take leave of Lymington, I certainly should not have answered you so soon. Knowing the place, and the amusements it affords, I should have had more modesty than to suppose myself capable of adding any thing

to your present entertainments worthy to rank with them. I am not, however, totally destitute of such pleasures as an inland country may pretend to. If my windows do not command a view of the ocean, at least they look out upon a profusion of mignonette; which, if it be not so grand an object, is however quite as fragrant: and if I have not an hermit in a grotto, I have nevertheless myself in a greenhouse, a less venerable figure perhaps, but not at all less animated than he: nor are we in this nook altogether unfurnished with such means of philosophical experiment, and speculation, as at present the world rings with. On Thursday morning last, we sent up a balloon from Emberton meadow. Thrice it rose, and as oft descended, and in the evening it performed another flight at Newport, where it went up, and came down no more. Like the arrow, discharged at the pigeon in the Trojan games, it kindled in the air, and was consumed in a moment. I have not heard what interpretation the soothsayers have given to the omen, but shall wonder a little if the Newton shepherd prognosticate any thing less from it than the most bloody war, that was ever waged in Europe.

I am reading Cook's last voyage, and am much

pleased and amused with it. It seems, that in some of the Friendly isles, they excel so much in dancing, and perform that operation with such exquisite delicacy and grace, that they are not surpassed even upon our European stages. Oh! that Vestris had been in the ship, that he might have seen himself outdone by a savage. The paper indeed tells us, that the queen of France had clapped this king of capers up in prison, for declining to dance before her, on a pretence of sickness, when in fact he was in perfect health. If this be true, perhaps he may by this time be prepared to second such a wish as mine, and to think, that the durance he suffers, would be well exchanged for a dance at Anamooka. I should, however, as little have expected to hear, that these islanders had such consummate skill in an art that requires so much taste in the conduct of the person, as that they were good mathematicians and astronomers. Defective, as they are, in every branch of knowledge, and in every other species of refinement, it seems wonderful that they should arrive at such perfection in the dance, which some of our English gentlemen, with all the assistance of French instruction, find it impossible to learn. We must conclude, therefore, that particular nations have

a genius for particular feats, and that our neighbours in France, and our friends in the South-sea, have minds very nearly akin, though they inhabit countries so very remote from each other.

Mrs. Unwin remembers to have been in company with Mr. Gilpin at her Brother's. She thought him very sensible and polite, and consequently very agreeable.

We are truly glad that Mrs. Newton and yourself are so well, and that there is reason to hope that Eliza is better. You will learn from this letter that we are so, and that for my own part, I am not quite so low in spirits as at some times. Learn too, what you knew before, that we love you all, and that I am

Your

Affectionate friend,

W. C.

LETTER LXVIII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Sep. 11, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You have my thanks for the enquiries you have made. Despairing, however, of meeting with such confirmation of that new mode, as would warrant a general stricture, I had, before the receipt of your last, discarded the passage in which I had censured it. I am proceeding in my transcript with all possible dispatch, having nearly finished the fourth book, and hoping, by the end of the month, to have completed the work. When finished, that no time may be lost, I purpose taking the first opportunity to transmit it to Leman-street, but must beg that you will give me in your next, an exact direction, that it may proceed to the mark without any hazard of a miscarriage. A second transcript of it would be a labour I should very reluctantly undertake; for though I have kept copies of all the material alterations, there are many minutiæ of which I have made none; it is besides slavish work, and of all occu-

pations, that, which I dislike the most. I know that you will lose no time in reading it, but I must beg you likewise to lose none in conveying it to Johnson, that if he chuses to print it, it may go to the press immediately; if not, that it may be offered directly to your friend Longman, or any other. Not that I doubt Johnson's acceptance of it, for he will find it more *ad captum populi* than the former. I have not numbered the lines, except of the four first books, which amount to three thousand, two hundred, and seventy six. I imagine, therefore, that the whole contains about five-thousand. I mention this circumstance now, because it may save him some trouble in casting the size of the book, and I might possibly forget it in another letter.

About a fortnight since, we had a visit from Mr. ——, whom I had not seen many years. He introduced himself to us very politely, with many thanks on his own part, and on the part of his family, for the amusement which my book had afforded them. He said he was sure that it must make its way, and hoped that I had not laid down the pen. I only told him in general terms, that the use of the pen was necessary to my well being, but gave him no hint of this last production. He said, that one passage in

particular, had absolutely electrified him, meaning the description of the Briton in Table Talk. He seemed indeed to emit some sparks, when he mentioned it. I was glad to have that picture noticed by a man of a cultivated mind, because I had always thought well of it myself, and had never heard it distinguished before. Assure yourself, my William, that though I would not write thus freely on the subject of me or mine, to any but yourself, the pleasure I have in doing it, is a most innocent one, and partakes not, in the least degree, so far as my conscience is to be credited, of that vanity with which authors are in general so justly chargeable. Whatever I do, I confess that I most sincerely wish to do it well, and when I have reason to hope, that I have succeeded, am pleased indeed, but not proud; for He, who has placed every thing out of the reach of man, except what he freely gives him, has made it impossible for a reflecting mind, that knows this, to indulge so silly a passion for a moment.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER LXIX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

Sep. 11, 1784

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have never seen Doctor Cotton's book, concerning which your Sisters question me, nor did I know, 'till you mentioned it, that he had written any thing newer than his visions; I have no doubt that it is so far worthy of him, as to be pious and sensible, and I believe, no man living is better qualified to write on such subjects, as his title seems to announce. Some years have passed since I heard from him, and considering his great age, it is probable, that I shall hear from him no more; but I shall always respect him. He is truly a philosopher, according to my judgment of the character, every tittle of his knowledge in natural subjects, being connected in his mind, with the firm belief of an Omnipotent agent.

Yours, &c.

W. C.

LETTER LXX.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

Sep. 18, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Following your good example, I lay before me a sheet of my largest paper. It was this moment fair and unblemished, but I have begun to blot it, and having begun, am not likely to cease 'till I have spoiled it. I have sent you many a sheet that in my judgment of it, has been very unworthy of your acceptance, but my conscience was in some measure satisfied by reflecting, that if it were good for nothing, at the same time it cost you nothing, except the trouble of reading it. But the case is altered now. You must pay a solid price for frothy matter, and though I do not absolutely pick your pocket, yet you lose your money, and, as the saying is, are never the wiser.

My green-house is never so pleasant as when we are just on the point of being turned out of it. The gentleness of the autumnal suns, and the calmness of this latter season, make it a much more agree-

able retreat than we ever find it in the summer; when the winds being generally brisk, we cannot cool it by admitting a sufficient quantity of air, without being at the same time, incommoded by it. But now I sit with all the windows and the door wide open, and am regaled with the scent of every flower, in a garden as full of flowers as I have known how to make it. We keep no bees, but if I lived in a hive, I should hardly hear more of their music. All the bees in the neighbourhood resort to a bed of mignonette, opposite to the window, and pay me for the honey they get out of it, by a hum, which though rather monotonous, is as agreeable to my ear, as the whistling of my linnets. All the sounds that nature utters are delightful, at least in this country. I should not perhaps find the roaring of lions in Africa, or of bears in Russia, very pleasing, but I know no beast in England whose voice I do not account musical, save and except always the braying of an ass. The notes of all our birds and fowls please me, without one exception. I should not indeed think of keeping a goose in a cage; that I might hang him up in the parlour for the sake of his melody, but a goose upon a common, or in a farm-yard, is no bad performer; and as to insects, if the black beetle, and

beetles indeed of all hues, will keep out of my way, I have no objection to any of the rest; on the contrary, in whatever key they sing, from the gnat's fine treble, to the bass of the humble bee, I admire them all. Seriously however, it strikes me as a very observable instance of providential kindness to man, that such an exact accord has been contrived between his ear, and the sounds with which, at least in a rural situation, it is almost every moment visited. All the world is sensible of the uncomfortable effect that certain sounds have upon the nerves, and consequently upon the spirits——And if a sinful world had been filled with such as would have curdled the blood, and have made the sense of hearing a perpetual inconvenience, I do not know that we should have a right to complain. But now the fields, the woods, the gardens, have each their concert, and the ear of man is for ever regaled, by creatures who seem only to please themselves. Even the ears that are deaf to the Gospel, are continually entertained, though without knowing it, by sounds, for which they are solely indebted to its author. There is somewhere in infinite space, a world, that does not roll within the precincts of mercy, and as it is reasonable, and even scriptural to suppose, that there is music

in heaven, in those dismal regions perhaps the reverse of it is found; tones so dismal, as to make woe itself more insupportable, and to aggravate even despair. But my paper admonishes me in good time to draw the reins, and to check the descent of my fancy into deeps, with which she is but too familiar.

Our best love attends you both, with yours,

W. C.

LETTER LXXI.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Oct. 2, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

A poet can but ill spare time for prose. The truth is, I am in haste to finish my transcript, that you may receive it time enough to give it a leisurely reading before you go to town; which, whether I shall be able to accomplish, is at present uncertain. I have the whole punctuation to settle, which in blank verse is of the last importance and of a species peculiar to that composition; for I

know no use of points, unless to direct the voice, the management of which, in the reading of blank verse, being more difficult than in the reading of any other poetry, requires perpetual hints and notices, to regulate the inflexions, cadences, and pauses. This however is an affair, that in spite of grammarians, must be left pretty much *ad libitum scriptoris*. For I suppose every author points according to his own reading. If I can send the parcel to the waggon by one o'clock next Wednesday, you will have it on Saturday the ninth. But this is more than I expect. Perhaps I shall not be able to dispatch it till the eleventh, in which case it will not reach you till the thirteenth. I rather think that the latter of these two periods will obtain, because, besides the punctuation, I have the argument of each book to transcribe. Add to this, that in writing for the printer, I am forced to write my best, which makes slow work. The motto of the whole is—*Fit surculus arbor*. If you can put the author's name under it, do so—if not, it must go without one. For I know not to whom to ascribe it. It was a motto taken by a certain prince of Orange, in the year 1733, but not to a poem of his own writing, or indeed to any poem at all, but as I think, to a medal.

Mr. —— is a Cornish member; but for what place in Cornwall I know not. All I know of him is, that I saw him once clap his two hands upon a rail, meaning to leap over it. But he did not think the attempt a safe one, and therefore took them off again. He was in company with Mr. Throckmorton. With that gentleman we drank chocolate since I wrote last. The occasion of our visit was, as usual, a balloon. Your Mother invited her, and I him, and they promised to return the visit, but have not yet performed. *Tout le monde se trouvoit là*, as you may suppose, among the rest, Mrs. W——. She was driven to the door by her son, a boy of seventeen, in a phaeton, drawn by four horses from Lilliput. This is an ambiguous expression, and should what I write now be legible a thousand years hence, might puzzle commentators. Be it known, therefore, to the Aldusses, and the Stevenses of ages yet to come, that I do not mean to affirm, that Mrs. W—— herself came from Lilliput that morning, or indeed that she ever was there, but merely to describe the horses, as being so diminutive, that they might be, with propriety, said to be Lilliputian.

The privilege of franking having been so cropped, I know not in what manner I and my bookseller

are to settle the conveyance of proof sheets hither, and back again. They must travel, I imagine, by coach, a large quantity of them at a time; for, like other authors, I find myself under a poetical necessity of being frugal.

We love you all, jointly, and separately, as usual.

W. C.

I have not seen, nor shall see, the Dissenter's answer to Mr. Newton, unless you can furnish me with it.

LETTER LXXII.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

Oct. 9, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The pains you have taken to disengage our correspondence from the expence with which it was threatened, convincing me that my letters, trivial as they are, are yet acceptable to you, encourage me to observe my usual punctuality.

You complain of unconnected thoughts. I believe there is not a head in the world but might utter the same complaint, and that all would do so, were they all as attentive to their own vagaries, and as honest as yours. The description of your meditations at least suits mine; perhaps I can go a step beyond you, upon the same ground, and assert with the strictest truth, that I not only do not think with connexion, but that I frequently do not think at all. I am much mistaken if I do not often catch myself napping in this way; for when I ask myself, what was the last idea, (as the ushers at Westminster ask an idle boy, what was the last word) I am not able to answer, but like the boy in question, am obliged to stare and say nothing. This may be a very unphilosophical account of myself, and may clash very much with the general opinion of the learned, that the soul being an active principle, and her activity consisting in thought, she must consequently always think. But pardon me, messieurs les philosophes, there are moments, when if I think at all, I am utterly unconscious of doing so, and the thought, and the consciousness of it, seem to me at least, who am no philosopher, to be inseparable from each other. Perhaps however, we may both be right; and if you will grant me that I do

not always think, I will in return concede to you the activity you contend for, and will qualify the difference between us by supposing, that though the soul be in herself an active principle, the influence of her present union with a principle, that is not such, makes her often dormant, suspends her operations, and affects her with a sort of deliquium, in which she suffers a temporary loss of all her functions. I have related to you my experience truly, and without disguise; you must therefore, either admit my assertion, that the soul does not necessarily always act; or deny that mine is an human soul: a negative that I am sure you will not easily prove. So much for a dispute which I little thought of being engaged in to day.

Last night I had a letter from Lord Dartmouth. It was to apprize me of the safe arrival of Cook's last voyage, which he was so kind as to lend me in Saint James's square. The reading of those volumes afforded me much amusement, and I hope some instruction. No observation, however, forced itself upon me with more violence than one, that I could not help making on the death of Captain Cook. God is a jealous God, and at Owhyhee the poor man was content to be worshipped. From that moment, the remarkable interposition of Providence in his favor, was con-

verted into an opposition, that thwarted all his purposes. He left the scene of his deification, but was driven back to it by a most violent storm, in which he suffered more than in any, that had preceded it. When he departed he left his worshippers still infatuated with an idea of his godship, consequently well disposed to serve him. At his return, he found them sullen, distrustful, and mysterious. A trifling theft was committed, which, by a blunder of his own in pursuing the thief after the property had been restored, was magnified to an affair of the last importance. One of their favorite chiefs was killed too by a blunder. Nothing, in short, but blunder and mistake attended him, till he fell breathless into the water, and then all was smooth again. The world indeed will not take notice, or see, that the dispensation bore evident marks of divine displeasure; but a mind, I think, in any degree spiritual, cannot overlook them. We know from truth itself, that the death of Herod was for a similar offence. But Herod was in no sense a believer in God, nor had enjoyed half the opportunities, with which our poor countryman had been favored. It may be urged, perhaps, that he was in jest, that he meant nothing but his own amusement, and that of his companions. I doubt

it. He knows little of the heart, who does not know, that even in a sensible man, it is flattered by every species of exaltation. But be it so, that he was in sport—it was not humane, to say no worse of it, to sport with the ignorance of his friends, to mock their simplicity, to humour and acquiesce in their blind credulity. Besides, though a stock or stone may be worshipped blameless, a baptized man may not. He knows what he does, and by suffering such honors to be paid him, incurs the guilt of sacrilege.*

We are glad that you are so happy in your church, in your society, and in all your connexions.

* *NOTE BY THE EDITOR.*

Having enjoyed in the year 1779, the pleasure of conversing with this illustrious seaman, on board his own ship the Resolution, I cannot pass the present letter without observing, that I am persuaded my friend Cowper utterly misapprehended the behaviour of Captain Cook, in the affair alluded to. From the little personal acquaintance, which I had myself with this humane and truly Christian navigator, and from the whole tenor of his life, I cannot believe it possible for him to have acted, under any circumstances, with such impious arrogance, as might appear offensive in the eyes of the Almighty.

I have not left myself room to say any thing of the love we feel for you.

Yours,

My dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER LXXIII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Oct. 10, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I send you four quires of verse, which having sent, I shall dismiss from my thoughts, and think no more of, till I see them in print. I have not after all found time, or industry enough, to give the last hand to the points. I believe, however, they are not very erroneous, though in so long a work, and in a work, that requires nicety in this particular, some inaccuracies will escape. Where you find any, you will oblige me by correcting them.

In some passages, especially in the second book, you will observe me very satirical. Writing on

such subjects I could not be otherwise. I can write nothing without aiming at least at usefulness. It were beneath my years to do it, and still more dishonorable to my religion. I know that a reformation of such abuses, as I have censured, is not to be expected, from the efforts of a poet; but to contemplate the world, its follies, its vices, its indifference to duty, and its strenuous attachment to what is evil, and not to reprehend, were to approve it. From this charge at least, I shall be clear, for I have neither tacitly nor expressly flattered either its characters, or its customs. I have paid one, and only one compliment, which was so justly due, that I did not know how to withhold it, especially having so fair an occasion, (I forget myself, there is another in the first book to Mr. Throckmorton) but the compliment I mean is to Mr. ———. It is however so managed, that nobody but himself can make the application, and you, to whom I disclose the secret; a delicacy on my part, which so much delicacy on his obliged me to the observance of!

What there is of a religious cast in the volume I have thrown towards the end of it, for two reasons ——first, that I might not revolt the reader at his entrance——and secondly, that my best impressions

might be made last. Were I to write as many volumes as Lopez de Vega, or Voltaire, not one of them would be without this tincture. If the world like it not, so much the worse for them. I make all the concessions I can, that I may please them, but I will not please them at the expence of my conscience.

My descriptions are all from nature. Not one of them second-handed. My delineations of the heart are from my own experience. Not one of them borrowed from books, or in the least degree conjectural. In my numbers, which I varied as much as I could (for blank-verse without variety of numbers, is no better than bladder and string) I have imitated nobody, though sometimes perhaps there may be an apparent resemblance; because at the same time that I would not imitate, I have not affectedly differed.

If the work cannot boast a regular plan, (in which respect however I do not think it altogether indefensible) it may yet boast that the reflections are naturally suggested always by the preceding passage, and that except the fifth book, which is rather of a political aspect, the whole has one tendency; to discountenance the modern enthusiasm after a London life, and to recommend rural ease.

and leisure, as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue.

If it pleases you I shall be happy, and collect from your pleasure in it, an omen of its general acceptance

Yours,

My dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER LXXIV.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Oct. 20, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Your letter has relieved me from some anxiety, and given me a good deal of positive pleasure. I have faith in your judgment, and an implicit confidence in the sincerity of your approbation. The writing of so long a poem is a serious business; and the author must know little of his own heart, who does not in some degree suspect himself of partiality to his own production; and

who is he, that would not be mortified by the discovery, that he had written five thousand lines in vain? The poem however, which you have in hand, will not of itself make a volume so large as the last, or as a bookseller would wish. I say this, because when I had sent Johnson five thousand verses, he applied for a thousand more. Two years since, I began a piece which grew to the length of two hundred, and there stopped. I have lately resumed it, and (I believe) shall finish it. But the subject is fruitful, and will not be comprised in a smaller compass than seven or eight hundred verses. It turns on the question, whether an education at school or at home be preferable, and I shall give the preference to the latter. I mean, that it shall pursue the track of the former. That is to say, that it shall visit Stock in its way to publication. My design also is to inscribe it to you. But you must see it first; and if, after seeing it, you should have any objection, though it should be no bigger than the tittle of an *i*, I will deny myself that pleasure, and find no fault with your refusal. I have not been without thoughts of adding John Gilpin at the tail of all. He has made a good deal of noise in the world, and perhaps it may not be amiss to show, that though I write generally with a serious inten-

tion, I know how to be occasionally merry. The Critical Reviewers charged me with an attempt at humour. John, having been more celebrated upon the score of humour than most pieces, that have appeared in modern days, may serve to exonerate me from the imputation: but in this article I am entirely under your judgment, and mean to be set down by it. All these together will make an octavo like the last. I should have told you, that the piece which now employs me, is in rhyme. I do not intend to write any more blank. It is more difficult than rhyme, and not so amusing in the composition. If when you make the offer of my book to Johnson, he should stroke his chin, and look up to the cieling and cry—— "Hümph!"——anticipate him (I beseech you) at once, by saying—"that you know I should be sorry "that he should undertake for me to his own disad- "vantage, or that my volume should be in any degree "pressed upon him. I make him the offer merely "because, I think, he would have reason to complain "of me, if I did not."—But that punctilio once satisfied, it is a matter of indifference to me, what publisher sends me forth. If Longman should have difficulties, which is the more probable, as I understand

from you, that he does not in these cases see with his own eyes, but will consult a brother poet, take no pains to conquer them. The idea of being hawked about, and especially of your being the hawker, is insupportable. Nichols (I have heard) is the most learned printer of the present day. He may be a man of taste as well as learning; and I suppose, that you would not want a gentleman usher to introduce you. He prints the Gentleman's Magazine, and may serve us, if the others should decline; if not, give yourself no farther trouble about the matter. I may possibly envy authors, who can afford to publish at their own expence, and in that case should write no more. But the mortification would not break my heart.

I proceed to your corrections, for which I most unaffectedly thank you, adverting to them in their order.

Page 140.—Truth generally without the article *the*, would not be sufficiently defined. There are many sorts of truth, philosophical, mathematical, moral, &c. and a reader, not much accustomed to hear of religious or scriptural truth, might possibly, and indeed easily doubt, what truth was particularly intended. I acknowledge that *grace* in my use of the word

does not often occur in poetry. So neither does the subject which I handle. Every subject has its own terms, and religious ones take theirs with most propriety from the scripture. Thence I take the word *grace*. The sarcastic use of it in the mouths of infidels I admit, but not their authority to proscribe it, especially as God's favor in the abstract has no other word, in all our language, by which it can be expressed.

Page 130.—*Impress the mind faintly, or not at all.*—I prefer this line, because of the interrupted run of it, having always observed, that a little unevenness of this sort, in a long work, has a good effect, used I mean, sparingly, and with discretion.

Page 127.—This should have been noted first, but was overlooked. Be pleased to alter for me thus, with the difference of only one word, from the alteration proposed by you——

> We too are friends to royalty. We love
> The king who loves the law, respects his bounds,
> And reigns content within them.

You observed probably, in your second reading, that I allow the life of an animal to be fairly taken

away, when it interferes either with the interest or convenience of man. Consequently snails, and all reptiles, that spoil our crops, either of fruit or grain, may be destroyed, if we can catch them. It gives me real pleasure that Mrs. Unwin so readily understood me. Blank verse, by the unusual arrangement of the words, and by the frequent infusion of one line into another, not less than by the style, which requires a kind of tragical magnificence, cannot be chargeable with much obscurity, must rather be singularly perspicuous to be so easily comprehended. It is my labour and my principal one, to be as clear as possible. You do not mistake me, when you suppose, that I have great respect for the virtue that flies temptation. It is that sort of prowess, which the whole train of scripture calls upon us to manifest, when assailed by sensual evil. Interior mischiefs must be grappled with. There is no flight from them. But solicitations to sin, that address themselves to our bodily senses, are, I believe, seldom conquered in any other way.

I can easily see that you may have very reasonable objections to my dedicatory proposal. You are a clergyman, and I have banged your order. You are a child of *alma mater*, and I have banged her too.

Lay yourself, therefore, under no constraints, that I do not lay you under, but consider yourself as perfectly free.

With our best love to you all, I bid you heartily farewell. I am tired of this endless scribblement. Adieu!

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER LXXV.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

Oct. 30, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I accede most readily to the justness of your remarks, on the subject of the truly Roman heroism of the Sandwich islanders. Proofs of such prowess, I believe, are seldom exhibited by a people, who have attained to a high degree of civilization. Refinement, and profligacy of principle, are too nearly allied to admit of any thing so noble; and I question whether any instances of faithful friendship like that, which so much affected

you in the behaviour of the poor savage were produced even by the Romans themselves, in the latter days of the empire. They had been a nation, whose virtues it is impossible not to wonder at. But Greece, which was to them, what France is to us, a Pandora's box of mischief, reduced them to her own standard, and they naturally soon sunk still lower. Religion in this case seems pretty much out of the question. To the production of such heroism, undebauched nature herself is equal. When Italy was a land of heroes, she knew no more of the true God, than her cicisbeos and her fidlers know now; and indeed it seems a matter of indifference, whether a man be born under a truth, which does not influence him, or under the actual influence of a lie; or if there be any difference between the cases, it seems to be rather in favor of the latter: for a false persuasion, such as the Mahometan for instance, may animate the courage, and furnish motives for the contempt of death, while despisers of the true religion are punished for their folly, by being abandoned to the last degrees of depravity. Accordingly we see a Sandwich islander sacrificing himself to his dead friend, and our Christian seamen and mariners, instead of being impressed by a sense of his generosity, butchering him with a persevering cruelty

that will disgrace them for ever: for he was a defenceless, unresisting enemy, who meant nothing more than to gratify his love for the deceased. To slay him in such circumstances was to murder him, and with every aggravation of the crime that can be imagined.

I am again at Johnson's, in the shape of a poem in blank verse; consisting of six books, and called The Task. I began it about this time twelvemonth, and writing sometimes an hour in a day, sometimes half an one, and sometimes two hours, have lately finished it. I mentioned it not sooner, because almost to the last, I was doubtful whether I should ever bring it to a conclusion, working often in such distress of mind, as, while it spurred me to the work, at the same time threatened to disqualify me for it. My bookseller, I suppose, will be as tardy as before. I do not expect to be born into the world till the month of March, when I and the crocusses shall peep together. You may assure yourself that I shall take my first opportunity to wait on you. I mean likewise to gratify myself by obtruding my muse upon Mr. Bacon.

Adieu, my dear friend! We are well, and love you.

W. C.

LETTER LXXVI.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Nov 1, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND.

Were I to delay my answer; I must yet write without a frank at last, and may as well therefore write without one now, especially feeling as I do, a desire to thank you for your friendly offices so well performed. I am glad for your sake, as well as for my own, that you succeeded in the first instance, and that the first trouble proved the last. I am willing too to consider Johnson's readiness to accept a second volume of mine, as an argument, that at least he was no loser by the former. I collect from it some reasonable hope, that the volume in question may not wrong him neither. My imagination tells me (for I know you interest yourself in the success of my productions) that your heart fluttered when you approached Johnson's door, and that it felt itself discharged of a burthen when you came out again. You did well to mention it at the T——s; they will now know that you do not pretend a share in my confidence, whatever be the value of it, greater than you

actually possess. I wrote to Mr. Newton by the last post, to tell him that I was gone to the press again. He will be surprised, and perhaps not pleased. But I think he cannot complain, for he keeps his own authorly secrets without participating them with me. I do not think myself in the least injured by his reserve, neither should I if he were to publish a whole library without favoring me with any previous notice of his intentions. In these cases it is no violation of the laws of friendship not to communicate, though there must be a friendship where the communication is made. But many reasons may concur in disposing a writer to keep his work secret, and none of them injurious to his friends. The influence of one I have felt myself, for which none of them would blame me—I mean the desire of surprising agreeably. And if I have denied myself this pleasure in your instance, it was only to give myself a greater, by eradicating from your mind any little weeds of suspicion, that might still remain in it, that any man living is dearer to me than yourself. Had not this consideration forced up the lid of my strong box like a lever, it would have kept its contents with an invisible closeness to the last; and the first news, that either you or any of my friends would have heard of the

Task, they would have received from the public papers. But you know now, that neither as a poet nor as a man, do I give to any man a precedence in my estimation at your expence.

I am proceeding with my new work (which at present I feel myself much inclined to call by the name of Tirocinium) as fast as the muse permits. It has reached the length of seven hundred lines, and will probably receive an addition of two or three hundred more. When you see Mr. ——— perhaps you will not find it difficult to procure from him half-a-dozen franks, addressed to yourself, and dated the fifteenth of December, in which case, they will all go to the post filled with my lucubrations, on the evening of that day. I do not name an earlier, because I hate to be hurried; and Johnson cannot want it sooner than, thus managed, it will reach him.

I am not sorry, that John Gilpin, though hitherto he has been nobody's child, is likely to be owned at last. Here and there I can give him a touch that I think will mend him, the language in some places not being quite so quaint and old-fashioned as it should be; and in one of the stanzas there is a false rhyme. When I have thus given the finishing stroke to his figure, I mean to grace him

with two mottos, a Greek and a Latin one, which, when the world shall see that I have only a little one of three words to the volume itself, and none to the books of which it consists, they will perhaps understand as a stricture upon that pompous display of literature, with which some authors take occasion to crowd their titles. Knox, in particular, who is a sensible man too, has not, I think, fewer than half a dozen to his Essays.

Adieu,

W. C.

LETTER LXXVII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

November, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

To condole with you on the death of a Mother aged eighty-seven would be absurd—rather, therefore, as is reasonable, I congratulate you on the almost singular felicity of having enjoyed the company of so amiable, and so near a relation so long. Your lot and mine in this respect

have been very different, as indeed in almost every other. Your Mother lived to see you rise, at least to see you comfortably established in the world. Mine dying when I was six years old, did not live to see me sink in it. You may remember with pleasure while you live, a blessing vouchsafed to you so long, and I, while I live, must regret a comfort, of which I was deprived so early. I can truly say that not a week passes (perhaps I might with equal veracity say a day) in which I do not think of her. Such was the impression her tenderness made upon me, though the opportunity she had for shewing it was so short. But the ways of God are equal—and when I reflect on the pangs she would have suffered had she been a witness of all mine, I see more cause to rejoice, than to mourn, that she was hidden in the grave so soon.

We have as you say, lost a lively and sensible neighbour in Lady Austen, but we have been long accustomed to a state of retirement, within one degree of solitude, and being naturally lovers of still life, can relapse into our former duality without being unhappy at the change. To me indeed a third is not necessary, while I can have the companion I have had these twenty years.

I am gone to the press again; a volume of mine

will greet your hands some time either in the course of the winter, or early in the spring. You will find it, perhaps, on the whole more entertaining than the former, as it treats a greater variety of subjects, and those, at least the most, of a sublunary kind. It will consist of a poem in six books, called the Task. To which will be added another, which I finished yesterday, called, I believe, Tirocinium, on the subject of education.

You perceive that I have taken your advice, and given the pen no rest.

W. C.

LETTER LXXVIII.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

Nov. 27, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

All the interest, that you take in my new publication, and all the pleas, that you urge in behalf of your right to my confidence, the moment I had read your letter, struck me as so many proofs of your regard; of a friendship, in which dis-

tance and time make no abatement. But it is difficult to adjust opposite claims to the satisfaction of all parties. I have done my best, and must leave it to your candour to put a just interpretation upon all that has passed, and to give me credit for it, as a certain truth, that whatever seeming defects in point of attention, and attachment to you, my conduct on this occasion may have appeared to have been chargeable with, I am in reality as clear of all real ones as you would wish to find me.

I send you inclosed in the first place, a copy of the advertisement to the reader, which accounts for my title, not otherwise easily accounted for—— secondly, what is called an argument, or a summary of the contents of each book, more circumstantial and diffuse by far than that, which I have sent to the press. It will give you a pretty accurate acquaintance with my matter, though the tenons and mortices, by which the several passages are connected, and let into each other, cannot be explained in a syllabus—and lastly, an extract as you desired. The subject of it I am sure will please you, and as I have admitted into my description no images, but what are scriptural, and have aimed as exactly as I could at the plain and simple sublimity of the scripture language, I have

hopes the manner of it may please you too. As far as the numbers and diction are concerned, it may serve pretty well for a sample of the whole. But the subjects being so various, no single passage can in all respects be a specimen of the book at large.

My principal purpose is to allure the reader, by character, by scenery, by imagery, and such poetical embellishments, to the reading of what may profit him. Subordinately to this, to combat that predilection in favor of a metropolis, that beggars and exhausts the country, by evacuating it of all its principal inhabitants: and collaterally, and as far as is consistent with this double intention, to have a stroke at vice, vanity, and folly, wherever I find them. I have not spared the universities. A letter which appeared in the General Evening Post of Saturday, said to have been received by a general officer, and by him sent to the press, as worthy of public notice, and which has all the appearance of authenicity, would alone justify the severest censures of those bodies, if any such justification were wanted. By way of supplement to what I have written on this subject. I have added a poem, called Tirocinium, which is in rhyme. It treats of the scandalous relaxation of discipline, that obtains in almost all schools universally,

but especially in the largest, which are so negligent in the article of morals, that boys are debauched in general the moment they are capable of being so. It recommends the office of tutor to the father, where there is no real impediment, the expedient of a domestic tutor, where there is; and the disposal of boys into the hands of a respectable country clergyman, who limits his attention to two, in all cases where they cannot conveniently be educated at home. Mr. Unwin happily affording me an instance in point, the poem is inscribed to him. You will now, I hope, command your hunger to be patient, and be satisfied with the luncheon that I send, 'till dinner comes. That piece-meal perusal of the work, sheet by sheet, would be so disadvantageous to the work itself, and therefore so uncomfortable to me, that (I dare say) you will wave your desire of it. A poem, thus disjointed, cannot possibly be fit for any body's inspection but the author's.

Tully's rule——"*Nulla dies sine lineâ*,"—will make a volume in less time than one would suppose. I adhered to it so rigidly, that though more than once I found three lines as many as I had time to compass, still I wrote; and finding occasionally, and as it might happen, a more fluent vein, the abundance of

one day made me amends for the barrenness of another. But I do not mean to write blank-verse again Not having the music of rhyme, it requires so close an attention to the pause, and the cadence, and such a peculiar mode of expression, as render it, to me at least, the most difficult species of poetry, that I have ever meddled with.

I am obliged to you, and to Mr. Bacon, for your kind remembrance of me, when you meet. No artist can excel, as he does, without the finest feelings; and every man that has the finest feelings is, and must be amiable.

Adieu,

My dear friend!

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

LETTER LXXIX.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Nov. 29, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am happy that you are pleased, and accept it as an earnest that I shall not at least disgust the public. For though I know your partiality to me, I know at the same time with what laudable tenderness you feel for your own reputation, and that for the sake of that most delicate part of your property, though you would not criticise me with an unfriendly and undue severity, you would however beware of being satisfied too hastily, and with no warrantable cause of being so. I called you the tutor of your two sons, in contemplation of the certainty of that event——it is a fact in suspense, not in fiction.

My principal errand to you now, is to give you information on the following subject: The moment Mr. Newton knew (and I took care that he should learn it first from me) that I had communicated to you what I had concealed from him, and that you were my authorship's go-between with Johnson on this

occasion, he sent me a most friendly letter indeed, but one in every line of which I could hear the soft murmurs of something like mortification, that could not be entirely suppressed. It contained nothing however that you yourself would have blamed, or that I had not every reason to consider as evidence of his regard to me. He concluded the subject with desiring to know something of my plan, to be favored with an extract, by way of specimen, or (which he should like better still) with wishing me to order Johnson to send him a proof as fast as they were printed off. Determining not to accede to this last request for many reasons (but especially because I would no more show my poem piece-meal, than I would my house if I had one; the merits of the structure, in either case being equally liable to suffer by such a partial view of it) I have endeavoured to compromise the difference between us, and to satisfy him without disgracing myself. The proof sheets I have absolutely, though civilly refused. But I have sent him a copy of the arguments of each book, more dilated and circumstantial than those inserted in the work; and to these I have added an extract as he desired; selecting, as most suited to his taste—The view of the restoration of all things—which you recollect

to have seen near the end of the last book. I hold it necessary to tell you this, lest, if you should call upon him, he should startle you by discovering a degree of information upon the subject, which you could not otherwise know how to reconcile, or to account for.

You have executed your commissions *a merveille*. We not only approve, but admire. No apology was wanting for the balance struck at the bottom, which we accounted rather a beauty than a deformity. Pardon a poor poet, who cannot speak even of pounds, shillings, and pence, but in his own way.

I have read Lunardi with pleasure. He is a lively sensible young fellow, and I suppose a very favorable sample of the Italians. When I look at his picture, I can fancy that I see in him that good sense and courage, that no doubt were legible in the face of a young Roman, two thousand years ago.

Your affectionate

W. C.

LETTER LXXX.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

Dec. 13, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Having imitated no man, I may reasonably hope, that I shall not incur the disadvantage of a comparison with my betters. Milton's manner was peculiar. So is Thomson's. He, that should write like either of them, would in my judgment, deserve the name of a copyist, but not a poet. A judicious and sensible reader therefore, like yourself, will not say that my manner is not good, because it does not resemble theirs, but will rather consider what it is in itself. Blank-verse is susceptible of a much greater diversification of manner, than verse in rhyme: and why the modern writers of it have all thought proper to cast their numbers alike, I know not. Certainly it was not necessity, that compelled them to it. I flatter myself however, that I have avoided that sameness with others, which would entitle me to nothing but a share in one common oblivion with them all. It is possible, that, as a Reviewer of my former volume found cause to say, that he

knew not to what class of writers to refer me, the Reviewer of this, whoever he shall be, may see occasion to remark the same singularity. At any rate, though as little apt to be sanguine as most men, and more prone to fear and despond, than to over-rate my own productions, I am persuaded, that I shall not forfeit any thing by this volume, that I gained by the last. As to the title, I take it to be the best that is to be had. It is not possible that a book, including such a variety of subjects, and in which no particular one is predominant, should find a title adapted to them all. In such a case, it seemed almost necessary to accommodate the name to the incident, that gave birth to the poem; nor does it appear to me, that because I performed more than my task, therefore the Task is not a suitable title. A house would still be a house, though the builder of it should make it ten times as big as he at first intended. I might indeed, following the example of the Sunday news-monger, call it the Olio. But I should do myself wrong: for though it have much variety, it has I trust, no confusion.

For the same reason none of the interior titles apply themselves to the contents at large of that book, to which they belong. They are, every one of them, taken either from the leading (I should say

the introductory) passage of that particular book, or from that, which makes the most conspicuous figure in it. Had I set off with a design to write upon a gridiron, and had I actually written near two hundred lines upon that utensil, as I have upon the Sofa, the gridiron should have been my title. But, the Sofa being, as I may say, the starting-post, from which I addressed myself to the long race, that I soon conceived a design to run, it acquired a just pre-eminence in my account, and was very worthily advanced to the titular honor it enjoys, its right being at least so far a good one, that no word in the language could pretend a better.

The Time-piece appears to me, (though by some accident the import of that title has escaped you) to have a degree of propriety beyond the most of them. The book to which it belongs, is intended to strike the hour that gives notice of approaching judgment; and dealing pretty largely in the signs of the times, seems to be denominated, as it is, with a sufficient degree of accommodation to the subject.

As to the word *worm*, it is the very appellation which Milton himself, in a certain passage of the Paradise Lost, gives to the serpent. Not having the book at hand, I cannot now refer to it. but I am sure

of the fact. I am mistaken too, if Shakspeare's Cleopatra do not call the asp, by which she thought fit to destroy herself, by the same name. But, not having read the play these five-and-twenty years, I will not affirm it. They are however without all doubt convertible terms.——A worm is a small serpent, and a serpent is a large worm. And when an epithet significant of the most terrible species of those creatures is adjoined, the idea is surely sufficiently ascertained. No animal of the vermicular or serpentine kind is crested, but the most formidable of all.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

LETTER LXXXI.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Dec. 18, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I condole with you, that you had the trouble to ascend St. Paul's in vain, but at the same time congratulate you, that you escaped an

ague. I should be very well pleased to have a fair prospect of a balloon under sail, with a philosopher or two on board, but at the same time, should be very sorry to expose myself, for any length of time, to the rigour of the upper regions, at this season, for the sake of it. The travellers themselves, I suppose, are secured from all injuries of the weather by that fervency of spirit and agitation of mind, which must needs accompany them in their flight; advantages, which the more composed and phlegmatic spectator is not equally possessed of.

The inscription of the poem is more your own affair than any other person's. You have, therefore, an undoubted right to fashion it to your mind, nor have I the least objection to the slight alteration, that you have made in it. I inserted what you have erased for a reason, that was perhaps rather chimerical than solid. I feared, however, that the Reviewers, or some of my sagacious readers, not more merciful than they, might suspect, that there was a secret design in the wind, and that author and friend had consulted in what manner author might introduce friend to public notice, as a clergyman every way qualified to entertain a pupil or two, if peradventure any gentleman of fortune were in want of a tutor for his children.

I therefore added the words—"And of his two sons only"—by way of insinuating, that you are perfectly satisfied with your present charge, and that you do not wish for more; thus meaning to obviate an illiberal construction, which we are, both of us incapable of deserving. But the same caution not having appeared to you to be necessary, I am very willing and ready to suppose that it is not so.

I intended in my last to have given you my reasons for the compliment, that I paid Bishop Bagot, lest, knowing that I have no personal connexion with him, you should suspect me of having done it rather too much at a venture. In the first place then, I wished the world to know, that I have no objection to a bishop, *quià*, bishop. In the the second place, the brothers were all five my school-fellows, and very amiable and valuable boys they were. Thirdly, Lewis, the bishop, had been rudely and coarsely treated in the Monthly Review, on account of a sermon, which appeared to me, when I read their extract from it, to deserve the highest commendations, as exhibiting explicit proof of both of his good sense, and his unfeigned piety. For these causes, me there unto moving, I felt myself happy in an opportuniy to do public honour to a worthy man, who had been

publicly traduced; and indeed the Reviewers themselves have since repented of their aspersions, and have travelled not a little out of their way in order to retract them, having taken occasion by the sermon preached at the bishop's visitation at Norwich, to say every thing handsome of his lordship, who whatever might be the merit of the discourse, in that instance at least could himself lay claim to no other than that of being a hearer.

Since I wrote, I have had a letter from Mr. Newton that did not please me, and returned an answer to it that possibly may not have pleased him. We shall come together again soon (I suppose) upon as amicable terms as usual. But at present he is in a state of mortification. He would have been pleased, had the book passed out of his hands into yours, or even out of yours into his, so that he had previously had opportunity to advise a measure, which I pursued without his recommendation, and had seen the poems in manuscript. But my design was to pay you a whole compliment, and I have done it. If he says more on the subject, I shall speak freely, and perhaps please him less than I have done already.

Yours, with love to you all.

W. C.

LETTER LXXXII.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

Christmas Eve, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am neither Mede nor Persian, neither am I the son of any such, but was born at Great Berkhamsted, in Hartfordshire, and yet I can neither find a new title for my book, nor please myself with any addition to the old one. I am however willing to hope, that, when the volume shall cast itself at your feet, you will be in some measure reconciled to the name it bears, especially when you shall find it justified both by the exordium of the poem, and by the conclusion. But enough, as you say with great truth, of a subject very unworthy of so much consideration.

Had I heard any anecdotes of poor dying——, that would have bid fair to deserve your attention, I should have sent them. The little, that he is reported to have uttered of a spiritual import, was not very striking. That little however I can give you upon good authority. His brother asking him, how he found himself, he replied, "I am very composed, and think,

that I may safely believe myself entitled to a portion." The world has had much to say in his praise, and both prose and verse have been employed to celebrate him in the Northampton Mercury. But Christians (I suppose) have judged it best to be silent. If he ever drank at the fountain of life, he certainly drank also, and often too freely of certain other streams, which are not to be bought without money and without price. He had virtues that dazzled the natural eye, and failings that shocked the spiritual one. But *iste dies indicabit.*

W. C.

LETTER LXXXIII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

The slice, which (you observe) has been taken from the top of the sheet, it lost, before I began to write; but being a part of the paper which is seldom used, I thought it would be pity to discard, or to degrade to meaner purposes, the fair and ample remnant, on account of so immaterial a de-

fect. I therefore have destined it to be the vehicle of a letter, which you will accept as entire, though a lawyer perhaps would, without much difficulty, prove it to be but a fragment. The best recompence I can make you for writing without a frank, is to propose it to you to take your revenge by returning an answer under the same predicament; and the best reason I can give for doing it is, the occasion following. In my last I recommended it to you to procure franks for the conveyance of Tirocinium, dated on a day therein mentioned, and the earliest, which at that time I could venture to appoint. It has happened, however, that the poem is finished a month sooner than I expected, and two-thirds of it are at this time fairly transcribed; an accident, to which the riders of a Parnassian steed are liable, who never know, before they mount him, at what rate he will chuse to travel. If he be indisposed to dispatch, it is impossible to accelerate his pace; if otherwise, equally impossible to stop him. Therefore my errand to you at this time, is to cancel the former assignation, and to inform you, that by whatever means you please, and as soon as you please, the piece in question will be ready to attend you; for without exerting any ex-

traordinary diligence, I shall have completed the transcript in a week.

The critics will never know, that four lines of it were composed, while I had a dose of ipecacuanha on my stomach, in short, that I was delivered of the emetic and the verses in the same moment. Knew they this, they would at least allow me to be a poet of singular industry, and confess that I lose no time. I have heard of poets, who have found cathartics of sovereign use, when they had occasion to be particularly brilliant. Dryden always used them, and in commemoration of it, Bayes in the Rehearsal is made to inform the audience that in a poetical emergency, he always had recourse to stewed prunes. But I am the only poet who has dared to reverse the prescription, and whose enterprize, having succeeded to admiration, warrants him to recommend an emetic to all future bards, as the most infallible means of producing a fluent and easy versification.

My love to all your family.

Adieu!

W. C.

LETTER LXXXIV.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Jan. 15, 1785.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Your letters are always welcome. You can always either find something to say, or can amuse me and yourself with a sociable and friendly way of saying nothing. I never found that a letter was the more easily written, because, the writing of it had been long delayed. On the contrary, experience has taught me to answer soon, that I may do it without difficulty. It is in vain to wait for an accumulation of materials in a situation such as your's and mine, productive of few events. At the end of our expectations we shall find ourselves as poor as at the beginning.

I can hardly tell you with any certainty of information, upon what terms Mr. Newton and I may be supposed to stand at present. A month (I believe) has passed, since I heard from him. But my *friseur*, having been in London in the course of this week, whence he returned last night, and having called at Hoxton, brought me his love and an ex-

cuse for his silence, which (he said) had been occasioned by the frequency of his preachings at this season. He was not pleased, that my manuscript was not first transmitted to him, and I have cause to suspect, that he was even mortified at being informed, that a certain inscribed poem, was not inscribed to himself. But we shall jumble together again, as people that have an affection for each other at bottom, notwithstanding now and then a slight disagreement, always do.

I know not, whether Mr. ——— has acted in consequence of your hint, or whether, not needing one, he transmitted to us his bounty, before he had received it. He has, however, sent us a note for twenty pounds; with which we have performed wonders, in behalf of the ragged and the starved. He is a most extraordinary young man, and, though I shall probably never see him, will always have a niche in the museum of my reverential remembrance.

The death of Dr. Johnson has set a thousand scribblers to work, and me among the rest. While I lay in bed, waiting till I could reasonably hope, that the parlour might be ready for me, I invoked the muse, and composed the following

EPITAPH.

Here Johnson lies——a sage by all allow'd
Whom to have bred, may well make England proud;
Whose prose was eloquence, by wisdom taught,
The graceful vehicle of virtuous thought;
Whose verse may claim, grave, masculine, and strong,
Superior praise to the mere poet's song;
How many a noble gift from Heaven possess'd,
And faith at last, alone worth all the rest.
O man, immortal by a double prize,
By fame on earth, by glory in the skies!

It is destined (I believe) to the Gentleman's Magazine, which I consider as a respectable repository for small matters, which, when entrusted to a newspaper, can expect but the duration of a day. But, Nichols having at present a small piece of mine in his hands, not yet printed, (it is called the Poplar-field, and, I suppose, you have it) I wait till his obsterical aid has brought that to light, before I send him a new one. In his last he published my epitaph upon Tiney; which (I likewise imagine) has been long in your collection.

Not a word yet from Johnson, I am easy however upon the subject, being assured that so long as

his own interest is at stake, he will not want a monitor to remind him of the proper time to publish.

You and your family have our sincere love. Forget not to present my respectful compliments to Miss Unwin, and, if you have not done it already, thank her on my part, for the very agreeable narrative of Lunardi. He is a young man (I presume) of great good sense and spirit, (his letters at least, and his enterprising turn, bespeak him such) a man qualified to shine not only among the stars, but in the more useful, though humbler sphere of terrestrial occupation.

I have been crossing the channel in a balloon, ever since I read of that achievement by Blanchard. I have an insatiable thirst to know the philosophical reason, why his vehicle had like to have fallen into the sea, when for aught that appears, the gas was not at all exhausted. Did not the extreme cold condense the inflammable air, and cause the globe to collapse? Tell me, and be my Apollo for ever!

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

LETTER LXXXV.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Feb. 7, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We live in a state of such uninterrupted retirement, in which incidents worthy to be recorded occur so seldom, that I always sit down to write with a discouraging conviction, that I have nothing to say. The event commonly justifies the presage. For when I have filled my sheet, I find that I have said nothing. Be it known to you however, that I may now at least communicate a piece of intelligence, to which you will not be altogether indifferent; that I have received, and returned to Johnson, the two first proof-sheets of my new publication. The business was dispatched indeed a fortnight ago, since when I have heard from him no further. From such a beginning however, I venture to prognosticate the progress, and in due time the conclusion of the matter.

In the last Gentleman's Magazine my Poplarfield appears. I have accordingly sent up two pieces more, a Latin translation of it, which you have never

seen, and another on a Rose-bud, the neck of which I inadvertently broke, which whether you have seen or not, I know not. As fast as Nichols prints off the poems I send him, I send him new ones. My remittance usually consists of two; and he publishes one of them at a time. I may indeed furnish him at this rate, without putting myself to any great inconvenience. For my last supply was transmitted to him in August, and is but now exhausted.

I communicate the following at your Mother's instance, who will suffer no part of my praise to be sunk in oblivion. A certain Lord has hired a house at Clifton, in our neighbourhood, for a hunting seat, There he lives at present with his wife and daughter. They are an exemplary family in some respects, and (I believe) an amiable one in all. The Reverend Mr. Jones, the curate of that parish, who often dines with them by invitation on a Sunday, recommended my volume to their reading; and his Lordship, after having perused a part of it, expressed an ardent desire to be acquainted with the author, from motives, which my great modesty will not suffer me to particularize. Mr. Jones however, like a wise man, informed his Lordship, that for certain special reasons and causes I had declined going into company, for

many years, and that therefore, he must not hope for my acquaintance. His Lordship most civilly subjoined, that he was sorry for it. "And is that all?" Say you. Now were I to hear you say so, I should look foolish, and say—"Yes."—But having you at a distance, I snap my fingers at you, and say—"No, that is not all."—Mr. ———, who favors us now and then with his company, in an evening, as usual, was not long since discoursing with that eloquence, which is so peculiar to himself, on the many providential interpositions, that had taken place in his favor. "He had wished for many things (he said) "which at the time, when he formed those wishes, "seemed distant and improbable, some of them in-"deed impossible. Among other wishes that he had "indulged, one was, that he might be connected with "men of genius and ability—and in my connexion "with this worthy gentleman, (said he, turning to "me) that wish I am sure, is amply gratified." You may suppose, that I felt the sweat gush out upon my forehead, when I heard this speech; and if you do, you will not be at all mistaken. So much was I delighted with the delicacy of that incense.

Thus far I proceeded easily enough; and here I laid down my pen, and spent some minutes in re-

collection, endeavouring to find some subject, with which I might fill the little blank, that remains. But none presents itself. Farewel, therefore, and remember those that are mindful of you!

Present our love to all your comfortable fireside, and believe me ever most affectionately yours,

W. C.

They, that read Greek with the accents, would pronounce the ε in φιλεω, as an η. But I do not hold with that practice, though educated in it. I should therefore utter it just as I do the Latin word *filio*, taking the quantity for my guide.

LETTER LXXXVI.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

March 20, 1785.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I thank you for your letter. It made me laugh, and there are not many things capable of being contained within the dimensions of a letter, for which I see cause to be more thankful. I

was pleased too, to see my opinion of his Lordship's *nonchalance* upon a subject, that you had so much at heart, completely verified. I do not know, that the eye of a nobleman was ever dissected. I cannot help supposing however, that, were that organ, as it exists in the head of such a personage, to be accurately examined, it would be found to differ materially in its construction from the eye of a commoner; so very different is the view, that men in an elevated, and in an humble station, have of the same object. What appears great, sublime, beautiful, and important, to you and to me, when submitted to my lord, or his grace, and submitted too with the utmost humility, is either too minute to be visible at all, or if seen, seems trivial, and of no account. My supposition therefore seems not altogether chimerical.

In two months I have corrected proof-sheets to the amount of ninety three pages, and no more. In other words, I have received three pacquets. Nothing is quick enough for impatience, and I suppose that the impatience of an author has the quickest of all possible movements. It appears to me however, that at this rate we shall not publish till next autumn. Should you happen therefore to pass Johnson's door, pop in your head as you go, and just in-

sinuate to him, that, were his remittances rather more frequent, that frequency would be no inconvenience to me. I much expected one this evening, a fortnight having now elapsed since the arrival of the last. But none came, and I felt myself a little mortified. I took up the newspaper however, and read it. There I found, that the Emperor and the Dutch are, after all their negociations, going to war. Such reflections as these struck me. A great part of Europe is going to be involved in the greatest of all calamities —troops are in motion—artillery is drawn together —cabinets are busied in contriving schemes of blood, and devastation——thousands will perish, who are incapable of understanding the dispute, and thousands who, whatever the event may be, are little more interested in it than myself, will suffer unspeakable hardships in the course of the quarrel—Well! Mr. Poet, and how then? You have composed certain verses, which you are desirous to see in print, and because the impression seems to be delayed, you are displeased, not to say dispirited——be ashamed of yourself! you live in a world in which your feelings may find worthier subjects——be concerned for the havock of nations, and mourn over your retarded

volume, when you find a dearth of more important tragedies!

You postpone certain topics of conference to our next meeting. When shall it take place? I do not wish for you just now, because the garden is a wilderness, and so is all the country around us. In May we shall have, asparagus, and weather, in which we may stroll to Weston; at least, we may hope for it; therefore, come in May; you will find us happy to receive you, and as much of your fair household as you can bring with you.

We are very sorry for your Uncle's indisposition. The approach of summer seems however to to be in his favor, that season being of all remedies for the rheumatism, I believe, the most effectual.

I thank you for your intelligence concerning the celebrity of John Gilpin. You may be sure that it was agreeable—but your own feelings on occasion of that article, pleased me most of all. Well, my friend, be comforted! You had not an opportunity of saying publicly. "I know the Author." But the author himself will say as much for you soon, and perhaps will feel in doing so a gratification equal to your own.

In the affair of face-painting, I am precisely of your opinion.

Adieu,

W. C.

LETTER LXXXVII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

April 30, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I return you thanks for a letter so warm with the intelligence of the celebrity of John Gilpin. I little thought, when I mounted him upon my Pegasus, that he would become so famous. I have learned also, from Mr. Newton, that he is equally renowned in Scotland, and that a lady there had undertaken to write a second part, on the subject of Mrs. Gilpin's return to London; but not succeeding in it as she wished, she dropped it. He tells me likewise that the head master of St. Paul's school (who he is I know not) has conceived, in consequence of the entertainment that John has afforded him, a ve-

hement desire to write to me. Let us hope he will alter his mind; for should we even exchange civilities on the occasion, Tirocinium will spoil all. The great estimation however, in which this knight of the stone-bottles is held, may turn out a circumstance propitious to the volume, of which his history will make a part. Those events, that prove the prelude to our greatest success, are often apparently trivial in themselves, and such as seemed to promise nothing. The disappointment that Horace mentions, is reversed —We design a mug, and it proves a hogshead. It is a little hard, that I alone should be unfurnished with a printed copy of this facetious story. When you visit London next, you must buy the most elegant impression of it, and bring it with you. I thank you also for writing to Johnson. I likewise wrote to him myself. Your letter and mine together, have operated to admiration. There needs nothing more, but that the effect be lasting, and the whole will soon be printed. We now draw towards the middle of the fifth book of the Task. The man, Johnson, is like unto some vicious horses, that I have known. They would not budge, till they were spurred, and, when they were spurred, they would kick——So did he— His temper was somewhat disconcerted; but his pace was quickened, and I was contented.

I was very much pleased with the following sentence in Mr. Newton's last——"I am perfectly "satisfied with the propriety of your proceeding as "to the publication."——Now therefore we are friends again. Now he once more inquires after the work, which, till he had disburdened himself of this acknowledgement, neither he nor I, in any of our letters to each other, ever mentioned. Some side-wind has wafted to him a report of those reasons, by which I justified my conduct. I never made a secret of them. Both your Mother and I have studiously deposited them with those, who, we thought, were most likely to transmit them to him. They wanted only an hearing, which once obtained, their solidity and cogency were such, that they were sure to prevail.

You mention ——. I formerly knew the man you mention, but his elder brother much better. We were school-fellows, and he was one of a club of seven Westminster men, to which I belonged, who dined together every Thursday. Should it please God to give me ability to perform the poet's part to some purpose, many whom I once called friends, but who have since treated me with a most magnificent indifference, will be ready to take me by the hand again,

and some, whom I never held in that estimation, will like——, (who was but a boy, when I left London) boast of a connexion with me, which they never had. Had I the virtues, and graces, and accomplishments of St. Paul himself, I might have them at Olney, and nobody would care a button about me, yourself and one or two more excepted. Fame begets favour, and one talent, if it be rubbed a little bright by use and practice, will procure a man more friends than a thousand virtues. Dr. Johnson, (I believe) in the life of one of our poets, says, that he retired from the world flattering himself, that he should be regretted. But the world never missed him. I think his observation upon it is, that the vacancy made by the retreat of any individual, is soon filled up; that a man may always be obscure, if he chuses to be so; and that he, who neglects the world, will be by the world neglected.

Your Mother and I walked yesterday in the Wilderness. As we entered the gate, a glimpse of something white, contained in a little hole in the gate-post, caught my eye. I looked again, and discovered a bird's nest, with two tiny eggs in it. By and by they will be fledged, and tailed, and get wing feathers, and fly. My case is somewhat similar

to that of the parent bird. My nest is in a little nook. Here I brood, and hatch, and in due time my progeny takes wing and whistles.

We wait for the time of your coming with pleasant expectations.

Yours truly,

W. C.

LETTER LXXXVIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

June 25, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I write in a nook, that I call my *Boudoir*. It is a summer-house not much bigger than a sedan chair, the door of which opens into the garden, that is now crowded with pinks, roses, and honey-suckles, and the window into my neighbour's orchard. It formerly served an apothecary, now dead, as a smoking-room; and under my feet is a trap-door, which once covered a hole in the ground,

where he kept his bottles. At present however it is dedicated to sublimer uses. Having lined it with garden-mats, and furnished it with a table and two chairs, here I write all, that I write in summer-time, whether to my friends, or to the public. It is secure from all noise, and a refuge from all intrusion; for intruders sometimes trouble me in the winter evenings at Olney. (But thanks to my *Boudoir!*) I can now hide myself from them. A poet's retreat is sacred. They acknowledge the truth of that proposition, and never presume to violate it.

The last sentence puts me in mind to tell you, that I have ordered my volume to your door. My bookseller is the most dilatory of all his fraternity, or you would have received it long since. It is more than a month, since I returned him the last proof, and consequently since the printing was finished. I sent him the manuscript at the beginning of November, that he might publish while the town was full, and he will hit the exact moment when it is entirely empty. Patience (you will perceive) is in no situation exempted from the severest trials; a mark that may serve to comfort you under the numberless trials of your own.

W. C.

LETTER LXXXIX.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 27, 1785.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

You and your party left me in a frame of mind, that indisposed me much to company. I comforted myself with the hope, that I should spend a silent day, in which I should find abundant leisure to indulge sensations, which though of the melancholy kind, I yet wished to nourish. But that hope proved vain. In less than an hour after your departure, Mr. ———, made his appearance at the green-house door. We were obliged to ask him to dinner, and he dined with us. He is an agreeable, sensible, well-bred young man, but with all his recommendations I felt, that on that occasion I could have spared him. So much better are the absent, whom we love much, than the present whom we love a little. I have however made myself amends since, and nothing else having interfered, have sent many thoughts after you.

Had you been gone two days, when a violent

thunder-storm came over us. I was passing out of the parlour into the hall, with Mungo at my heels, when a flash seemed to fill the room with fire. In the same instant came the clap, so that the explosion was (I suppose) perpendicular to the roof. Mungo's courage upon the tremendous occasion, constrained me to smile, in spite of the solemn impression that such an event never fails to affect me with——the moment that he heard the thunder, (which was like the burst of a great gun) with a wrinkled forehead, and with eyes directed to the ceiling, whence the sound seemed to proceed, he barked; but he barked exactly in concert with the thunder. It thundered once, and he barked once; and so precisely the very instant when the thunder happened, that both sounds seemed to begin and end together. Some dogs will clap their tails close, and sneak into a corner, at such a time, but Mungo it seems is of a more fearless family. An house at no great distance from ours, was the mark to which the lightning was directed; it knocked down the chimney, split the building, and carried away the corner of the next house, in which lay a fellow drunk, and asleep upon his bed——it roused and terrified him, and he promises to get drunk no more; but I have seen a woeful end of

many such conversions. I remember but one such storm at Olney, since I have known the place, and I am glad that it did not happen two days sooner for the sake of the ladies, who would probably, one of them at least, have been alarmed by it. I have received, since you went, two very flattering letters of thanks, one from Mr. Bacon, and one from Mr. Barham, such as might make a lean poet plump, and an humble poet proud. But being myself neither lean nor humble, I know of no other effect they had, than that they pleased me; and I communicate the intelligence to you not without an assured hope, that you will be pleased also. We are now going to walk, and thus far I have written before I have received your letter. Friday.—I must now be as compact as possible. When I began, I designed four sides, but, my pacquet being transformed into two single epistles, I can consequently afford you but three. I have filled a large sheet with animadversions upon Pope. I am proceeding in my translation—"*Velis et remis, omnibus nervis*"—as Hudibras has it; and if God give me health and ability, will put it into your hands when I see you next. Mr. —— has just left us. He has read my book, and, as if fearful, that I had overlooked some of them myself, has pointed out to me all its

beauties. I do assure you the man has a very acute discernment, and a taste that I have no fault to find with. I hope that you are of the same opinion.

Be not sorry, that your love of Christ was excited in you by a picture. Could a dog or a cat suggest to me the thought, that Christ is precious, I would not despise that thought, because a dog or a cat suggested it. The meanness of the instrument cannot debase the nobleness of the principle. He that kneels before a picture of Christ, is an idolater. But he in whose heart the sight of a picture kindles a warm remembrance of the Saviour's sufferings, must be a Christian. Suppose, that I dream as Gardiner did, that Christ walks before me, that he turns and smiles upon me, and fills my soul with ineffable love and joy. Will a man tell me, that I am deceived, that I ought not to love or rejoice in him for such a reason, because a dream is merely a picture drawn upon the imagination? I hold not with such divinity. To love Christ is the greatest dignity of man, be that affection wrought in him how it may.

Adieu! May the blessing of God be upon you all! It is your Mother's heart's wish and mine.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER XC.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

August 27, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND.

I was low in spirits yesterday, when your parcel came and raised them. Every proof of attention and regard to a man who lives in a vinegar-bottle, is welcome from his friends on the outside of it——accordingly your books were welcome (you must not forget by the way, that I want the original, of which you have sent me the translation only) and the ruffles from Miss Shuttleworth most welcome. I am covetous, if ever man was, of living in the remembrance of absentees, whom I highly value and esteem, and consequently felt myself much gratified by her very obliging present. I have had more comfort, far more comfort, in the connexions that I have formed within the last twenty years, than in the more numerous ones that I had before.

Memorandum—The latter are almost all Unwins or Unwinisms.

You are entitled to my thanks also for the facetious engravings of John Gilpin. A serious poem

is like a swan, it flies heavily, and never far, but a jest has the wings of a swallow, that never tire, and that carry it into every nook and corner. I am perfectly a stranger however to the reception, that my volume meets with, and (I believe) in respect of my *nonchalance* upon that subject, if authors would but copy so fair an example, am a most exemplary character. I must tell you nevertheless, that although the laurels that I gain at Olney will never minister much to my pride, I have acquired some. The Rev. Mr. S—— is my admirer, and thinks my second volume superior to my first. It ought to be so. If we do not improve by practice, then nothing can mend us; and a man has no more cause to be mortified at being told that he has excelled himself, than the elephant had, whose praise it was, that he was the greatest elephant in the world, himself excepted. If it be fair to judge of a book by an extract, I do not wonder, that you were so little edified by Johnson's Journal. It is even more ridiculous than was poor ——'s of flatulent memory. The portion of it, given to us in this day's paper, contains not one sentiment worth one farthing, except the last, in which he resolves to bind himself with no more unbidden obligations. Poor man! one would think, that to pray for his dead wife, and

to pinch himself with church-fasts, had been almost the whole of his religion. I am sorry, that he, who was so manly an advocate for the cause of virtue in all other places, was so childishly employed, and so superstitiously too, in his closet. Had he studied his Bible more, to which by his own confession, he was in great part a stranger, he had known better what use to make of his retired hours, and had trifled less. His lucubrations of this sort, have rather the appearance of religious dotage, than of any vigorous exertions towards God. It will be well if the publication prove not hurtful in its effects, by exposing the best cause, already too much despised, to ridicule still more profane. On the other side of the same paper, I find a long string of aphorisms, and maxims, and rules, for the conduct of life, which though they appear not with his name, are so much in his manner, with the above-mentioned, that I suspect them for his. I have not read them all, but several of them I read that were trivial enough: for the sake of one however I forgive him the rest—he advises never to banish hope entirely, because it is the cordial of life, although it be the greatest flatterer in the world. Such a measure of hope as may not endanger my peace by disappointment I would wish to cherish

upon every subject, in which I am interested. But there lies the difficulty. A cure however, and the only one, for all the irregularities of hope and fear, is found in submission to the will of God. Happy they that have it!

This last sentence puts me in mind of your reference to Blair in his former letter, whom you there permitted to be your arbiter to adjust the respective claims of *who* or *that*. I do not rashly differ from so great a grammarian, nor do at any rate differ from him altogether—upon solemn occasions, as in prayer or preaching for instance, I would be strictly correct, and upon stately ones; for instance were I writing an epic poem, I would be so likewise, but not upon familiar occasions. God *who* heareth prayer, is right. Hector, *who* saw Patroclus, is right. And the man, *that* dresses me every day, is in my mind right also;—— because the contrary would give an air of stiffness and pedantry to an expression that in respect of the matter of it, cannot be too negligently made up.

Adieu, my dear William! I have scribbled with all my might, which, breakfast-time excepted, has been my employment ever since I rose, and it is now past one. Yours, W. C.

The second volume of Cowper's Poems, of whose delay in the press he had complained so feelingly, was now (in the summer of 1785) beginning to circulate with extensive rapidity. It not only raised him to the summit of poetical reputation, but obtained for him a blessing infinitely dearer to his affectionate heart, another female friend, and lively associate, now providentially led to contribute to his comfort, when the advanced age and infirmities of Mrs. Unwin made such an acquisition of new, or rather revived, friendship, a matter of infinite importance to the tranquillity and welfare of the sequestered poet.

The lady, to whom I allude, had the advantage of being nearly related to Cowper, and several of his letters to her have already appeared. Their intercourse had been frequent, and endeared by reciprocal esteem in their early years, but the whirlwinds of life had driven them far from the sight of each other. During the poet's long retirement, his fair Cousin had passed some years with her husband abroad, and others, after her return, in a variety of mournful duties. She was at this time a widow, and her indelible regard for her poetical relation, being agreeably inspirited by the publication of his recent works, she

wrote to him, on that occasion, a very affectionate letter.

It gave rise to many from him, which I am particularly happy in being enabled to make a part of this work, because they give a minute account of their admirable author at a very interesting period of his life; and because I persuade myself they will reflect peculiar honor on my departed friend, in various points of view, and lead the public to join with me in thinking, that is letters are rivals to his Poems in the rare excellence of representing life and nature with graceful and endearing fidelity.

LETTER XCI.

To Lady HESKETH.

Oct. 12, 1785.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

It is no new thing with you to give pleasure. But I will venture to say, that you do not often give more than you gave me this morning. When I came down to breakfast, and found upon the table a letter franked by my Uncle, and when opening that frank I found that it contained a letter from you, I said within myself—"This is just as it should be. We are all grown young again, and the days that I thought I should see no more, are actually returned." You perceive therefore, that you judged well when you conjectured, that a line from you would not be disagreeable to me. It could not be otherwise, than as in fact it proved, a most agreeable surprise, for I can truly boast of an affection for you, that neither years, nor interrupted intercourse, have at all abated. I need only recollect how much I valued you once, and with how much cause, immediately to feel a revival of the same value: if that can be said to revive, which at the most has only

been dormant for want of employment, but I slander it when I say that it has slept. A thousand times have I recollected a thousand scenes, in which our two selves have formed the whole of the drama, with the greatest pleasure; at times too, when I had no reason to suppose, that I should ever hear from you again. I have laughed with you at the Arabian Nights' Entertainment, which afforded us, as you well know, a fund of merriment that deserves never to be forgot. I have walked with you to Netley Abbey, and have scrambled with you over hedges in every direction, and many other feats we have performed together, upon the field of my remembrance, and all within these few years. Should I say within this twelvemonth, I should not transgress the truth. The hours, that I have spent with you, were among the pleasantest of my former days, and are therefore chronicled in my mind, so deeply as to feel no erasure. Neither do I forget my poor friend, Sir Thomas, I should remember him indeed, at any rate, on account of his personal kindness to myself, but the last testimony that he gave of his regard for you, endears him to me still more. With his uncommon understanding (for with many peculiarities he had more sense than any of his acquaintance) and with his generous sensibilities, it

was hardly possible, that he should not distinguish you as he has done. As it was the last, so it was the best proof, that he could give, of a judgment that never deceived him, when he would allow himself leisure to consult it.

You say that you have often heard of me: that puzzles me. I cannot imagine from what quarter, but it is no matter. I must tell you, however, my Cousin, that your information has been a little defective. That I am happy in my situation is true; I live and have lived these twenty years, with Mrs. Unwin, to whose affectionate care of me, during the far greater part of that time, it is, under providence, owing, that I live at all. But I do not account myself happy in having been for thirteen of those years in a state of mind, that has made all that care and attention necessary; an attention, and a care, that have injured her health, and which had she not been uncommonly supported, must have brought her to the grave. But I will pass to another subject; it would be cruel to particularize only to give pain, neither would I by any means give a sable hue to the first letter of a correspondence so unexpectedly renewed.

I am delighted with what you tell me of my Uncle's good health. To enjoy any measure of

cheerfulness at so late a day is much. But to have that late day enlivened with the vivacity of youth, is much more, and in these postdiluvian times, a rarity indeed. Happy for the most part are parents, who have daughters. Daughters are not apt to outlive their natural affections, which a son has generally survived, even before his boyish years are expired. I rejoice particularly in my Uncle's felicity, who has three female descendants from his little person, who leave him nothing to wish for upon that head.

My dear Cousin, dejection of spirits, which (I suppose) may have prevented many a man from becoming an author, made me one. I find constant employment necessary, and therefore take care to be constantly employed. Manual occupations do not engage the mind sufficiently, as I know by experience, having tried many. But composition, especially of verse, absorbs it wholly. I write therefore generally three hours in a morning, and in an evening I transcribe. I read also, but less than I write, for I must have bodily exercise, and therefore never pass a day without it.

You ask me where I have been this summer. I answer, at Olney. Should you ask me where I spent the last seventeen summers, I should still answer, at

Olney. Aye, and the winters also, I have seldom left it, and except when I attended my brother in his last illness, never I believe a fortnight together.

Adieu, my beloved Cousin, I shall not always be thus nimble in reply, but shall always have great pleasure in answering you when I can.

Yours,

My dear friend, and Cousin,

W. C.

LETTER XCII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Oct. 22, 1785.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

You might well suppose, that your letter had miscarried, though in fact it was duly received. I am not often so long in arrear, and you may assure yourself, that when at any time it happens that I am so, neither neglect nor idleness is the cause. I have as you well know, a daily occupation, forty lines to translate, a task which I never

excuse myself, when it possible to perform it. Equally sedulous I am in the matter of transcribing, so that between both, my morning and evening are most part completely engaged. Add to this, that though my spirits are seldom so bad, but I can write verse, they are often at so low an ebb, as to make the production of a letter impossible. So much for a trespass, which, called for some apology, but for which to apologise further, would be a greater trespass still.

I am now in the twentieth book of Homer, and shall assuredly proceed, because the farther I go, the more I find myself justified in the undertaking; and in due time, if I live, shall assuredly publish. In the whole I shall have composed about forty thousand verses, about which forty thousand verses, I shall have taken great pains, on no occasion suffering a slovenly line to escape me. I leave you to guess therefore, whether such a labour once achieved, I shall not determine to turn it to some account, and to gain myself profit if I can, if not, at least, some credit for my reward,

I perfectly approve of your course with John. The most entertaining books are best to begin with, and none in the world, so far as entertainment is con-

cerned, deserves the preference to Homer. Neither do I know, that there is any where to be found Greek of easier construction. Poetical Greek I mean; and as for prose, I should recommend Xenophon's Cyropædia. That also is a most amusing narrative, and ten times easier to understand than the crabbed epigrams, and scribblements of the minor poets, that are generally put into the hands of boys. I took particular notice of the neatness of John's Greek character, which (let me tell you) deserves its share of commendation; for to write the language legibly is not the lot of every man, who can read it. Witness myself for one.

I like the little ode of Huntingford's that you sent me. In such matters we do not expect much novelty, or much depth of thought. The expression is all in all, which to me at least appears to be faultless.

Adieu, my dear William! We are well, and you and yours are ever the objects of our affection.

W. C.

LETTER XCIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, Nov. 9, 1785.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Whose last most affectionate letter has run in my head ever since I received it, and which I now sit down to answer, two days sooner than the post will serve me. I thank you for it, and with a warmth for which I am sure you will give me credit, though I do not spend many words in describing it. I do not seek *new* friends, not being altogether sure, that I should find them, but have unspeakable pleasure in being still beloved by an old one. I hope that now our correspondence has suffered its last interruption, and that we shall go down together to the grave, chatting and chirping as merrily as such a scene of things as this will permit.

I am happy that my poems have pleased you. My volume has afforded me no such pleasure at any time, either while I was writing it, or since its publication, as I have derived from yours, and my Uncle's opinion of it. I make certain allowances for partiality, and for that peculiar quickness of taste,

with which you both relish what you like, and after all draw-backs, upon those accounts, duly made, find myself rich in the measure of your approbation, that still remains. But above all, I honor John Gilpin, since it was he who first encouraged you to write. I made him on purpose to laugh at, and he served his purpose well; but I am now in debt to him for a more valuable acquisition than all the laughter in the world amounts to, the recovery of my intercourse with you, which is to me inestimable. My benevolent and generous Cousin, when I was once asked, if I wanted any thing, and given delicately to understand, that the enquirer was ready to supply all my occasions, I thankfully and civilly, but positively declined the favor. I neither suffer, nor have suffered, any such inconveniences as I had not much rather endure, than come under obligations of that sort to a person comparatively with yourself a stranger to me. But to you I answer otherwise. I know you thoroughly, and the liberality of your disposition, and have that consummate confidence in the sincerity of your wish to serve me, that delivers me from all awkward constraint, and from all fear of trespassing by acceptance. To you, therefore, I reply, yes. Whensoever and whatsoever, and in what manner soever you please;

and add moreover, that my affection for the giver is such, as will increase to me tenfold the satisfaction that I shall have in receiving. It is necessary however that I should let you a little into the state of my finances, that you may not suppose them more narrowly circumscribed than they are. Since Mrs. Unwin and I have lived at Olney, we have had but one purse, although during the whole of that time, till lately, her income was nearly double mine. Her revenues indeed are now in some measure reduced, and do not much exceed my own; the worst consequence of this is, that we are forced to deny ourselves some things which hitherto we have been better able to afford, but they are such things as neither life, nor the well-being of life depend upon. My own income has been better than it is, but when it was best, it would not have enabled me to live as my connexions demanded that I should, had it not been combined with a better than itself, at least at this end of the kingdom. Of this I had full proof during three months that I spent in lodgings at Huntingdon, in which time by the help of good management, and a clear notion of economical matters, I contrived to spend the income of a twelvemonth. Now, my beloved Cousin, you are in possession of the whole case as it stands,

Strain no points to your own inconvenience or hurt, for there is no need of it, but indulge yourself in communicating (no matter what) that you can spare without missing it, since by so doing you will be sure to add to the comforts of my life one of the sweetest that I can enjoy—a token and proof of your affection.

In the affair of my next publication, toward which you also offer me so kindly your assistance, there will be no need that you should help me in the manner that you propose. It will be a large work, consisting I should imagine, of six volumes at least. The twelfth of this month I shall have spent a year upon it, and it will cost me more than another. I do not love the booksellers well enough to make them a present of such a labour, but intend to publish by subscription. Your vote and interest, my dear Cousin, upon the occasion, if you please, but nothing more! I will trouble you with some papers of proposals when the time shall come, and am sure that you will circulate as many for me as you can. Now my dear I am going to tell you a secret. It is a great secret, that you must not whisper even to your cat. No creature is at this moment apprized of it but Mrs. Unwin and her Son. I am making a new translation of Homer,

and am on the point of finishing the twenty first book of the Iliad. The reasons upon which I undertake this Herculean labour, and by which I justify an enterprize in which I seem so effectually anticipated by Pope, although in fact he has not anticipated me at all, I may possibly give you, if you wish for them, when I can find nothing more interesting to say. A period which I do not conceive to be very near! I have not answered many things in your letter, nor can do it at present for want of room. I cannot believe but that I should know you, notwithstanding all, that time may have done. There is not a feature of your face, could I meet it upon the road, by itself, that I should not instantly recollect. I should say, that is my Cousin's nose, or those are her lips and her chin, and no woman upon earth can claim them but herself. As for me, I am a very smart youth of my years. I am not indeed grown grey so much as I am grown bald. No matter. There was more hair in the world than ever had the honor to belong to me. Accordingly having found just enough to curl a little at my ears, and to intermix with a little of my own, that still hangs behind, I appear, if you see me in an afternoon, to have a very decent head-dress, not easily distinguished from my natural growth,

which being worn with a small bag, and a black ribbon about my neck, continues to me the charms of my youth, even on the verge of age. Away with the fear of writing too often.

W. C.

P. S.——That the view I give you of myself may be complete I add the two following items—— That I am in debt to nobody, and that I grow fat.

LETTER XCIV.

To Lady HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

I am glad that I always loved you as I did. It releases me from any occasion to suspect, that my present affection for you, is indebted for its existence to any selfish considerations. No. I am sure I love you disinterestedly, and for your own sake, because I never thought of you, with any other sensations, than, those of the truest affection, even while I was under the persuasion, that I should

never hear from you again. But with my present feelings, superadded to those, that I always had for you, I find it no easy matter to do justice to my sensations. I perceive myself in a state of mind, similar to that of the traveller, described in Pope's Messiah; who as he passes through a sandy desert, starts at the sudden and unexpected sound of a waterfall. You have placed me in a situation new to me, and in which I feel myself somewhat puzzled how to behave. At the same time I would not grieve you, by putting a check upon your bounty, I would be as careful not to abuse it, as if I were a miser, and the question not about your money, but my own.

Although I do not suspect that a secret to you, my Cousin, is any burthen, yet having maturely considered that point, since I wrote my last, I feel myself altogether disposed to release you from the injunction, to that effect, under which I laid you. I have now made such a progress in my translation, that I need neither fear that I shall stop short of the end, nor that any other rider of Pegasus should overtake me. Therefore if at any time it should fall fairly in your way, or you should feel yourself invited to say, I am so occupied, you have my poetship's free per-

mission. Dr. Johnson read, and recommended my first volume.

W. C.

LETTER XCV.

To the Rev. WALTER BAGOT.

Nov. 9, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You desired me to return your good brother, the bishop's Charge as soon as I conveniently could, and the weather having forbidden us to hope for the pleasure of seeing you and Mrs. Bagot with you this morning, I return it now, lest, as you told me, that your stay in this country would be short, you should be gone before it could reach you.

I wish, as you do, that the Charge in question, could find its way into all the parsonages in the nation. It is so generally applicable, and yet so pointedly enforced, that it deserves the most extensive spread. I find in it the happiest mixture of spiritual authority, the meekness of a Christian, and the good-

manners of a gentleman. It has convinced me that the poet, who, like myself, shall take the liberty to pay the author of such valuable admonition a compliment, shall do at least as much honor to himself as to his subject.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER XCVI.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Dec. 24, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You would have found a letter from me at Mr. ———'s, according to your assignation, had not the post, setting out two hours sooner than the usual time, prevented me. The Odyssey that you sent has but one fault, at least but one that I have discovered, which is, that I cannot read it. The very attempt, if persevered in, would soon make me as blind as Homer was himself. I am now in the last book of the Iliad, shall be obliged to you therefore for a more legible one by the first opportunity.

I wrote to Johnson lately, desiring him to give me advice and information on the subject of proposals for a subscription, and he desired me in his answer, not to use that mode of publication, but to treat with him, adding, that he could make me such offers as (he believed) I should approve. I have replied to his letter, but abide by my first purpose.

Having occasion to write to Mr. ——, concerning his princely benevolence, extended this year also to the poor of Olney, I put in a good word for my poor self likewise, and have received a very obliging and encouraging answer. He promises me six names in particular, that (he says) will do me no discredit, and expresses a wish to be served with papers as soon as they shall be printed.

I meet with encouragement from all quarters, such as I find need of indeed in an enterprise of such length and moment, but such as at the same time I find effectual. Homer is not a poet to be translated under the disadvantage of doubts and dejection.

Let me sing the praises of the desks which—has sent me. In general it is as elegant as possible. In particular it is of cedar, beautifully lacquered. When put together, it assumes the form of a handsome small chest, and contains all sorts of accom-

modations; it is inlaid with ivory, and serves the purpose of a reading desk.

Your affectionate

W. C.

LETTER XCVII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

Dec. 24, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

'Till I had made such a progress in my present undertaking, as to put it out of all doubt, that, if I lived, I should proceed in, and finish it, I kept the matter to myself. It would have done me little honor to have told my friends, that I had an arduous enterprize in hand, if afterwards, I must have told, them, that I had dropped it. Knowing it to have been universally the opinion of the literati, ever since they have allowed themselves to consider the matter coolly, that a Translation, properly so called, of Homer, is, notwithstanding what Pope has done, a desideratum in the English language: it struck me that an attempt to supply the

deficiency would be an honorable one, and having made myself, in former years, somewhat critically a master of the original, I was by this double consideration induced to make the attempt myself. I am now translating into blank verse the last book of the Iliad, and mean to publish by subscription.

W. C.

LETTER XCVIII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Dec. 31, 1785.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

You have learned from my last that I am now conducting myself upon the plan that you recommended to me in the summer. But since I wrote it, I have made still farther advances in my negociation with Johnson. The proposals are adjusted. The proof-sheet has been printed off, corrected, and returned. They will be sent abroad as soon as I make up a complete list of the personages and persons, to whom I would have them sent; which in a few days, I hope to be able to accomplish. Johnson

behaves very well, at least, according to my conception of the matter, and seems sensible that I dealt liberally with him. He wishes me to be a gainer by my labours, in his own words, "to put something handsome into my pocket," and recommends two large quartos for the whole. He would not (he says) by any means, advise an extravagant price, and has fixed it at three guineas; the half, as usual, to be paid at the time of subscribing, the remainder on delivery. Five hundred names (he adds) at this price, will put above a thousand pounds into my purse. I am doing my best to obtain them. Mr. Newton is warm in my service, and can do not a little. I have of course written to Mr. Bagot; who, when he was here, with much earnestness and affection, intreated me so to do, as soon as I could have settled the conditions. If I could get Sir Richard Sutton's address, I would write to him also, though I have been but once, in his company, since I left Westminster, where he and I read the Iliad and Odyssey through together. I enclose Lord Dartmouth's answer to my application, which I will get you to shew to Lady Hesketh, because it will please her. I shall be glad if you can make an opportunity to call on her, during your present stay in town.

You observe therefore, that I am not wanting to myself. He that is so, has no just claim on the assistance of others, neither shall myself have cause to complain of me in other respects. I thank you for your friendly hints, and precautions, and shall not fail to give them the guidance of my pen. I respect the public, and I respect myself, and had rather want bread than expose myself wantonly to the condemnation of either. I hate the affectation, so frequently found in authors, of negligence and slovenly slightness, and in the present case, am sensible, how necessary it is to shun them, when I undertake the vast and invidious labour of doing better than Pope has done before me. I thank you, for all that you have said and done in my cause, and before-hand for all, that you shall say and do hereafter. I am sure, that there will be no deficiency on your part. In particular I thank you for taking such jealous care of my honor, and respectability, when the man you mention applied for samples of my translation. When I deal in wine, cloth, or cheese, I will give samples, but of verse never. No consideration would have induced me to comply with the gentleman's demand, unless he could have assured me, that his wife had longed.

I have frequently thought with pleasure of the summer that you have had in your heart, while you have been employed in softening the severity of winter, in behalf of so many, who must otherwise have been exposed to it. I wish, that you could make a general gaol-delivery, leaving only those behind, who cannot elsewhere be so properly disposed of. You never said a better thing in your life, than when you assured Mr. ——— of the expedience of a gift of bedding to the poor of Olney. There is no one article of this world's comforts, with which, as Falstaff says, they are so heinously unprovided. When a poor woman, and an honest one, whom we know well, carried home two pair of blankets, a pair for herself and husband, and a pair for her six children; as soon as the children saw them, they jumped out of their straw, caught them in their arms, kissed them, blessed them, and danced for joy. An old woman, a very old one, the first night that she found herself so comfortably covered, could not sleep a wink, being kept awake by the contrary emotions, of transport on the one hand, and the fear of not being thankful enough on the other.

It just occurs to me, to say, that this manuscript of mine will be ready for the press, as I hope, by the

end of February. I shall have finished the Iliad in about ten days, and shall proceed immediately to the revisal of the whole. You must, if possible, come down to Olney, if it be only that you may take charge of its safe delivery to Johnson. For if by any accident it should be lost, I am undone—the first copy being but a lean counterpart of the second.

Your Mother joins with me in love and good-wishes, of every kind, to you, and all yours.

Adieu,

W. C.

LETTER XCIX.

To Lady HESKETH.

Jan. 10, 1786.

It gave me great pleasure that you found my friend Unwin, what I was sure you would find him, a most agreeable man. I did not usher him in with the marrow-bones and cleavers of high-sounding panegyric, both because I was certain that whatsoever merit he had, your discernment

would mark it, and because it is possible to do a man material injury, by making his praise his harbinger. It is easy to raise expectation to such a pitch, that the reality, be it ever so excellent, must necessarily fall below it.

I hold myself much indebted to Mr. ——, of whom I have the first information from yourself, both for his friendly disposition towards me, and for the manner in which he marks the defects in my volume. An author must be tender indeed to wince on being touched so gently. It is undoubtedly as he says, and as you and my Uncle say, you cannot be all mistaken, neither is it at all probable that any of you should be so. I take it for granted therefore, that there are inequalities in the composition, and I do assure you my dear, most faithfully, that if it should reach a second edition, I will spare no pains to improve it. It may serve me for an agreeable amusement, perhaps, when Homer shall be gone, and done with. The first edition of poems has generally been susceptible of improvement. Pope, I believe, never published one in his life that did not undergo variations, and his longest pieces many. I will only observe, that inequalities there must be always, and in every work of length. There are level parts of every

subject, parts which we cannot with propriety attempt to elevate. They are by nature humble, and can only be made to assume an awkward and uncouth appearance by being mounted. But again I take it for granted, that this remark does not aply to the matter of your objection. You were sufficiently aware of it before, and have no need that I should suggest as an apology, could it have served that office, but would have made it for me yourself. In truth, my dear, had you known in what anguish of mind I wrote the whole of that poem, and under what perpetual interruptions from a cause, that has since been removed, so that sometimes I had not an opportunity of writing more than three lines at a sitting, you would long since have wondered as much as I do myself, that it turned out any thing better than Grub-street.

My Cousin, give yourself no trouble to find out any of the magi to scrutinize my Homer. I can do without them; and if I were not conscious that I have no need of their help, I would be the first to call for it. Assure yourself that I intend to be careful to the utmost line of all possible caution, both with respect to language and versification. I will

not send a verse to the press, that shall not have undergone the strictest examination.

A subscription is surely on every account the most eligible mode of publication. When I shall have emptied the purses of my friends, and of their friends, into my own, I am still free to levy contributions upon the world at large, and I shall then have a fund to defray the expences of a new edition. I have ordered Johnson to print the proposals immediately, and hope, that they will kiss your hands before the week is expired.

I have had the kindest letter from Josephus that I ever had. He mentioned my purpose to one of the Masters of Eton, who replied, that "such a work is much wanted."

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

LETTER C.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Jan. 14, 1786.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I am glad that you have seen Lady Hesketh, I knew that you would find her every thing that is amiable and elegant. Else, being my relation, I would never have shewn her to you. She also was delighted with her visiter, and expects the greatest pleasure in seeing you again; but is under some apprehensions, that a tender regard for the drum of your ear, may keep you from her. Never mind! You have two drums, and if she should crack both, I will buy you a trumpet.

General Cowper having much pressed me to accompany my proposals with a specimen, I have sent him one. It is taken from the twenty-fourth book of the Iliad, and is part of the interview between Priam and Achilles. Tell me, if it be possible for any man to tell me—why did Homer leave off at the burial of Hector? Is it possible, that he could be determined to it by a conceit, so little worthy of him, as that, having made the number of his books com-

pletely the alphabetical number, he would not for the joke's sake, proceed any farther? Why did he not give us the death of Achilles, and the destruction of Troy? Tell me also, if the critics, with Aristotle at their head, have not found, that he left off exactly where he should, and that every epic poem to all generations, is bound to conclude with the burial of Hector? I do not the least doubt it. Therefore, if I live to write a dozen epic poems, I will always take care to bury Hector, and to bring all matters at that point to an immediate conclusion.

I had a truly kind letter from Mr. ———, written immediately on his recovery from the fever. I am bound to honor James's powder, not only for the services it has often rendered to myself, but still more, for having been the means of preserving a life ten times more valuable to society, than mine is ever likely to be.

You say——"Why should I trouble you with my troubles?" I answer—"Why not? What is a "friend good for, if we may not lay one end of the "sack upon his shoulders, while we ourselves carry "the other?"

"You see your duty to God, and your duty to your neighbour; and you practise both, with your best

ability. Yet a certain person accounts you blind. I would that all the world were so blind even as you are. But there are some in it, who like the Chinese, say—"We have two eyes; and other nations have but one!" I am glad however, that in your one eye you have sight enough to discover, that such censures are not worth minding.

I thank you heartily for every step you take in the advancement of my present purpose.

Contrive to pay Lady H. a long visit, for she has a thousand things to say.

Yours, my dear William,

W. C.

LETTER CI.

To the Rev. WALTER BAGOT.

Jan. 15, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have just time to give you an hasty line to explain to you the delay that the publication of my proposals has unexpectedly en-

countered, and at which, I suppose, that you have been somewhat surprised.

I have a near relation in London, and a warm friend in General Cowper: he is also a person as able as willing to render me material service. I lately made him acquainted with my design of sending into the world a new Translation of Homer, and told him that my papers would soon attend him. He soon after desired that I would annex to them a specimen of the work. To this I at first objected for reasons that need not be enumerated here, but at last acceded to his advice; and, accordingly, the day before yesterday I sent him a specimen. It consists of one hundred and seven lines, and is taken from the interview between Priam and Achilles in the last book. I chose to extract from the latter end of the poem, and as near to the close of it as possible, that I might encourage a hope in the readers of it, that if they found it in some degree worthy of their approbation they would find the former parts of the work not less so. For if a writer flags any where, it must be when he is near the end.

My subscribers will have an option given them in the proposals respecting the price. My predecessor in the same business was not quite so mode-

rate. - - - You may say perhaps (at least if your kindness for me did not prevent it, you would be ready to say) "It is well—but do you place yourself on a level with Pope?" I answer, or rather *should* answer—"By no means—not as a poet; but as a translator of Homer, if I did not expect and believe that I should even surpass him, why have I meddled with this matter at all? If I confess inferiority, I reprobate my own undertaking.

When I can hear of the rest of the bishops that they preach and live as your brother does, I will think more respectfully of them than I feel inclined to do at present. They may be learned, and I know that some of them are, but your brother, learned as he is has other more powerful recommendations. Persuade him to publish his poetry, and I promise you, that he shall find as warm and sincere an admirer in me as in any man that lives.

Yours my dear friend,

Very affectionately,

W. C.

LETTER CIX.

To the Rev. WALTER BAGOT.

Jan. 23, 1786.

MY DEAR AND FAITHFUL FRIEND,

* * * *

* * * * *

The paragraph, that I am now beginning, will contain information of a kind, that I am not very fond of communicating, and on a subject, that I am not very fond of writing about. Only to you I will open my budget without reserve, because I know, that in what concerns my authorship you take an interest, that demands my confidence, and will be pleased with every occurrence, that is at all propitious to my endeavours. Lady Hesketh, who had she as many mouths as Virgil's Fame, with a tongue in each, would employ them all in my service, writes me word, that Dr. Maty of the Museum, has read my Task. I cannot even to you relate what he says of it, though, when I began this story, I thought I had courage enough to tell it boldly. He designs however to give his opinion of it in his next Monthly Review, and being informed that I was about to finish a translation of Homer, ask-

edher Ladyship's leave to mention the circumstance on that occasion. This incident pleases me the more, because I have authentic intelligence of his being a critical character, in all its forms, acute, sour, and blunt, and so incorruptible withal, and so unsusceptible of bias from undue motives, that, as my correspondent informs me, he would not praise his own Mother, did he not think she deserved it.

The said Task is likewise gone to Oxford, conveyed thither by an intimate friend of Dr. ——, with a purpose of putting it into his hands. My friend, what will they do with me at Oxford? Will they burn me at Carfax, or will they anathematize me with bell, book, and candle? I can say, with more truth than Ovid did—*Parve nec invideo.*

The said Dr. —— has been heard to say, and I give you his own words, (stop both your ears while I utter them) "that Homer has never been translated, and that Pope was a fool." Very irreverend language to be sure, but in consideration of the subject on which he used them, we will pardon it, even in a dean. One of the masters of Eton told a friend of mine lately, that a translation of Homer is much wanted. So now you have all my news. * *

Yours, my dear friend, cordially, W. C.

LETTER CIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, Jan. 31, 1786.

It is very pleasant, my dearest Cousin, to receive a present, so delicately conveyed as that which I received so lately from Anonymous; but it is also very painful to have nobody to thank for it. I find myself therefore driven by stress of necessity to the following resolutions, viz. that I will constitute you my Thanks-receiver-general, for whatsoever gift I shall receive hereafter, as well as for those that I have already received from a nameless benefactor. I therefore thank you, my Cousin, for a most elegant present, including the most elegant compliment that ever poet was honoured with; for a snuff-box of tortoise-shell, with a beautiful landscape on the lid of it, glazed with chrystal, having the figures of three hares in the fore-ground, and inscribed above with these words, *The Peasant's Nest*—and below with these—*Tiney, Puss, and Bess.* For all and every of these, I thank you, and also for standing proxy on this occasion. Nor must I forget to thank you that so

soon after I had sent you the first letter of Anonymous, I received another in the same hand.—There! Now I am a little easier.

I have almost conceived a design to send up half a dozen stout country fellows to tie by the leg to their respective bed-posts the company, that so abridges your opportunity of writing to me. Your letters are the joy of my heart, and I cannot endure to be robbed, by I know not whom, of half my treasure. But there is no comfort without a drawback, and therefore it is, that I, who have unknown friends, have unknown enemies also. Ever since I wrote last, I find myself in better health, and my nocturnal spasms and fever considerably abated. I intend to write to Dr. Kerr on Thursday, that I may gratify him with an account of my amendment: for to him I know, that it will be a gratification. Were he not a physician, I should regret that he lives so distant, for he is a most agreeable man; but being what he is, it would be impossible to have his company, even if he were a neighbour, unless in time of sickness, at which time whatever charms he might have himself, my own must necessarily lose much of their effect on him.

When I write to you, my dear, what I have already related to the General, I am always fearful lest

I should tell you that for news with which you are well acquainted. For once however I will venture. —On Wednesday last I received from Johnson the MS. copy of a specimen that I had sent to the General, and inclosed in the same cover Notes upon it by an unknown critic. Johnson, in a short letter, recommended him to me as a man of unquestionable learning and ability. On perusal and consideration of his remarks, I found him such, and having nothing so much at heart as to give all possible security to yourself and the General that my work shall not come forth unfinished, I answered Johnson that I would gladly submit my MS. to his friend. He is in truth, a very clever fellow, perfectly a stranger to me, and one who I promise you will not spare for severity of animadversion where he shall find occasion. It is impossible, for you, my dearest Cousin, to express a wish that I do not equally feel a wish to gratify. You are desirous that Maty should see a book of my Homer, and for that reason, if Maty *will* see a book of it, he shall be welcome, although time is likely to be precious, and consequently any delay, that is not absolutely necessary, as much as possible to be avoided. I am now revising the Iliad. It is a business that will cost me four months, perhaps five ; for I compare the

very words as I go, and if much alteration should occur, must transcribe the whole. The first book I have a'most transcribed already. To these five months Johnson says, that nine more must be added for printing, and upon my own experience, I will venture to assure you, that the tardiness of printers will make those nine months twelve. There is danger therefore that my subscribers may think, that I make them wait too long, and that they who know me not, may suspect a bubble. How glad shall I be to read it over in an evening, book by book, as fast as I settle the copy, to you, and to Mrs. Unwin! She has been my touchstone always, and without reference to her taste, and judgment, I have printed nothing. With one of you at each elbow I should think myself the happiest of all poets.

The General and I, having broken the ice, are upon the most comfortable terms of correspondence. He writes very affectionately to me, and I say every thing to him, that comes uppermost. I could not write frequently to any creature living, upon any other terms than those. He tells me of infirmities that he has, which make him less active than he was. I am sorry to hear that he has any such. Alas! Alas!

he was young when I saw him, only twenty years ago.

I have the most affectionate letter imaginable from Colman, who writes to me like a brother. The Chancellor is yet dumb.

May God have you in his keeping, my beloved Cousin.

Farewell,

W. C.

LETTER CIV.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, Feb. 9, 1786.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

I have been impatient to tell you, that I am impatient to see you again. Mrs. Unwin partakes with me in all my feelings upon this subject, and longs also to see you. I should have told you so by the last post, but have been so completely occupied by this tormenting specimen, that it was impossible to do it. I sent the General a letter on Monday, that would distress and alarm him; I

sent him another yesterday, that will, I hope, quiet him again. Johnson has apologised very civilly for the multitude of his friend's strictures; and his friend has promised to confine himself, in future, to a comparison of me with the original, so that (I doubt not) we shall jog on merrily together. And now, my dear, let me tell you once more, that your kindness in promising us a visit has charmed us both. I shall see you again. I shall hear your voice. We shall take walks together. I will shew you my prospects, the hovel, the alcove, the Ouse, and its banks, every thing that I have described. I anticipate the pleasure of those days not very far distant, and feel a part of it at this moment. Talk not of an inn! Mention it not for your life! We have never had so many visiters but we could easily accommodate them all; though we have received Unwin, and his wife, and his sister, and his son all at once. My dear, I will not let you come till the end of May, or beginning of June, because, before that time, my green-house will not be ready to receive us, and it is the only pleasant room belonging to us. When the plants go out, we go in. I line it with mats, and spread the floor with mats; and there you shall sit, with a bed of mignionette at

your side, and a hedge of honey-suckles, roses, and jasmine; and I will make you a bouquet of myrtle every day. Sooner than the time I mention the country will not be in complete beauty. And I will tell you what you shall find at your first entrance. Imprimis, as soon as you have entered the vestibule, if you cast a look on either side of you, you shall see on the right hand a box of my making. It is the box, in which have been lodged all my hares, and in which lodges Puss at present. But he, poor fellow, is worn out with age, and promises to die before you can see him. On the right hand, stands a cupboard, the work of the same author; it was once a dove-cage, but I transformed it. Opposite to you stands a table, which I also made. But, a merciless servant having scrubbed it, until it became paralytic, it serves no purpose now but of ornament; and all my clean shoes stand under it. On the left hand, at the farther end of this superb vestibule, you will find the door of the parlour, into which I will conduct you, and where I will introduce you to Mrs. Unwin, unless we should meet her before, and where we will be as happy, as the day is long. Order yourself, my Cousin, to the Swan at Newport, and there you shall find me ready to conduct you to Olney.

My dear, I have told Homer what you say about casks and urns, and have asked him, whether he is sure that it is a cask in which Jupiter keeps his wine. He swears that it is a cask, and that it will never be any thing better than a cask to eternity. So if the God is content with it, we must even wonder at his taste, and be so too.

Adieu! my dearest, dearest Cousin,

W. C.

LETTER CV.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, Feb. 11, 1786.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

It must be (I suppose) a fortnight or thereabout, since I wrote last, I feel myself so alert and so ready to write again. Be that as it may, here I come. We talk of nobody but you. What we will do with you when we get you, where you shall walk, where you shall sleep, in short every thing that bears the remotest relation to your well-

being at Olney, occupies all our talking time, which is all, that I do not spend at Troy.

I have every reason for writing to you as often as I can, but I have a particular reason for doing it now. I want to tell you, that by the Diligence on Wednesday next, I mean to send you a quire of my Homer for Maty's perusal. It will contain the first book, and as much of the second as brings us to the catalogue of the ships, and is every morsel of the revised copy that I have transcribed. My dearest Cousin, read it yourself, let the General read it, do what you please with it, so that it reach Johnson in due time. But let Maty be the only *Critic* that has any thing to do with it. The vexation, the perplexity, that attends a multiplicity of criticisms by various hands, many of which are sure to be futile, many of them ill-founded, and some of them contradictory to others, is inconceivable, except by the author, whose ill-fated work happens to be the subject of them. This also appears to me self-evident, that if a work have past under the review of one man of taste and learning, and have had the good fortune to please him, his approbation gives security for that of all others qualified like himself. I speak thus, my dear, after having just escaped from such a storm of trouble, occa-

sioned by endless remarks, hints, suggestions, and objections, as drove me almost to despair, and to the very verge of a resolution to drop my undertaking for ever. With infinite difficulty I at last sifted the chaff from the wheat, availed myself of what appeared to me to be just, and rejected the rest, but not till the labour and anxiety had nearly undone all that Kerr had been doing for me. My beloved Cousin, trust me for it, as you safely may, that temper, vanity, and self-importance, had nothing to do in all this distress that I suffered. It was merely the effect of an alarm that I could not help taking, when I compared the great trouble I had with a few lines only, thus handled, with that which I foresaw such handling of the whole must necessarily give me. I felt beforehand that my constitution would not bear it. I shall send up this second specimen in a box, that I have had made on purpose; and when Maty has done with the copy, and you have done with it yourself, then you must return it in said box to my translatorship. Though Johnson's friend has teased me sadly, I verily believe, that I shall have no more such cause to complain of him. We now understand one another, and I firmly believe, that I might have gone the world

through before I had found his equal in an accurate and familiar acquaintance with the original.

A letter to Mr. Urban in the last Gentleman's Magazine, of which I's book is the subject, pleases me more than any thing I have seen in the way of eulogium yet. I have no guess of the author.

I do not wish to remind the Chancellor of his promise. Ask you why, my Cousin? Because I suppose it would be impossible. He has no doubt forgotten it entirely, and would be obliged to take my word for the truth of it, which I could not bear. We drank tea together with Mrs. C——e, and her Sister, in King-street, Bloomsbury, and there was the promise made. I said——"Thurlow, I am no-"body, and shall be always nobody, and you will "be Chancellor. You shall provide for me when "you are." He smiled, and replied, "I surely will." "These ladies," said I, "are witnesses." He still smiled, and said—"Let them be so, for I will certainly do it." But alas! twenty-four years have passed since the day of the date thereof; and to mention it now would be to upbraid him with inattention to his plighted troth. Neither do I suppose, that he could easily serve such a creature as I am, if he would.

Adieu, whom I love entirely, W. C.

LETTER CVI.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, Feb. 19, 1786.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Since so it must be, so it shall be. If you will not sleep under the roof of a friend, may you never sleep under the roof of an enemy! An enemy however you will not presently find. Mrs. Unwin bids me mention her affectionately, and tell you, that she willingly gives up a part, for the sake of the rest, willingly, at least, as far as willingly may consist with some reluctance: I feel my reluctance too. Our design was that you should have slept in the room that serves me for a study, and its having been occupied by you, would have been an additional recommendation of it to me. But all reluctances are superseded by the thought of seeing you; and because we have nothing so much at heart, as the wish to see you happy and comfortable, we are desirous therefore to accommodate you to your own mind, and not to ours. Mrs. Unwin has already secured for you an apartment, or rather two, just such as we could wish. The house in which you will find them,

is within thirty yards of our own, and opposite to it. The whole affair is thus commodiously adjusted; and now I have nothing to do but to wish for June; and June, my Cousin, was never so wished for, since June was made. I shall have a thousand things to hear, and a thousand to say, and they will all rush into my mind together, till it will be so crowded, with things impatient to be said, that for some time I shall say nothing. But no matter—sooner or later they will all come out; and since we shall have you the longer for not having you under our own roof, (a circumstance, that, more than any thing, reconciles us to that measure) they will stand the better chance. After so long a separation, a separation, that of late seemed likely to last for life, we shall meet each other as alive from the dead; and for my own part, I can truly say, that I have not a friend in the other world, whose resurrection would give me greater pleasure.

I am truly happy, my dear, in having pleased you with what you have seen of my Homer. I wish that all English readers had your unsophisticated, or rather unadulterated taste, and could relish simplicity like you. But I am well aware, that in this respect I am under a disadvantage, and that many, especially

many ladies, missing many turns and prettinesses of expression, that they have admired in Pope, will account my translation in those particulars defective. But I comfort myself with the thought, that in reality it is no defect, on the contrary that the want of all such embellishments as do not belong to the original will be one of its principal merits with persons indeed capable of relishing Homer. He is the best poet that ever lived for many reasons, but for none more than for that majestic plainness that distinguishes him from all others. As an accomplished person moves gracefully without thinking of it, in like manner the dignity of Homer seems to cost him no labour. It was natural to him to say great things, and to say them well, and little ornaments were beneath his notice. If Maty; my dearest Cousin, should return to you my copy with any such strictures as may make it necessary for me to see it again, before it goes to Johnson, in that case you shall send it to me, otherwise to Johnson immediately; for he writes me word, he wishes his friend to go to work upon it as soon as possible. When you come, my dear, we will hang all these critics together. For they have worried me without remorse or conscience. At least one of them has. I had actually murdered more than

a few of the best lines in the specimen, in compliance with his requisitions, but plucked up my courage at last, and in the very last opportunity that I had, recovered them to life again by restoring the original reading. At the same time I readily confess that the specimen is the better for all this discipline its author has undergone, but then it has been more indebted for its improvement to that pointed accuracy of examination, to which I was myself excited, than to any proposed amendments from Mr. Critic; for as sure as you are my Cousin, whom I long to see at Olney, so surely would he have done me irreparable mischief, if I would have given him leave.

My friend Bagot writes to me in a most friendly strain, and calls loudly upon me for original poetry. When I shall have done with Homer, probably he will not call in vain. Having found the prime feather of a swan on the banks of the *smug and silver Trent*, he keeps it for me.

Adieu, dear Cousin,

W. C.

I am sorry that the General has such indifferent health. He must not die. I can by no means spare a person so kind to me.

LETTER CVII.

To the Rev. WALTER BAGOT.

Olney, Feb. 27, 1786.

Alas! Alas! my dear, dear friend, may God himself comfort you! I will not be so absurd as to attempt it. By the close of your letter it should seem that in this hour of great trial he withholds not his consolations from you. I know by experience, that they are neither few nor small; and though I feel for you as I never felt for man before, yet do I sincerely rejoice in this, that whereas there is but one true comforter in the universe, under afflictions such as yours, you both know him, and know where to seek him. I thought you a man the most happily mated, that I had ever seen, and had great pleasure in your felicity. Pardon me, if now I feel a wish, that, short as my acquaintance with her was, I had never seen her. I should have mourned with you, but not as I do now. Mrs. Unwin sympathizes with you also most sincerely, and you neither are, nor will be soon forgotten in such prayers as we can make at Olney. I will not detain you

longer now, my poor afflicted friend, than to commit you to the tender mercy of God, and to bid you a sorrowful adieu!

Adieu!

Ever yours,

W. C.

LETTER CVIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, March 6, 1786.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Your opinion has more weight with me than that of all the critics in the world; and, to give you a proof of it, I make you a concession, that I would hardly have made to them all united. I do not indeed absolutely covenant, promise, and agree, that I will discard *all* my elisions, but I hereby bind myself to dismiss *as many* of them, as, without sacrificing energy to sound, I can. It is incumbent upon me in the mean time to say something in justification of the few, that I shall retain, that I may not seem a poet mounted rather on a mule

than on Pegasus. In the first place, *The*, is a barbarism. We are indebted for it to the Celts, or the Goths, or to the Saxons, or perhaps to them all. In the two best languages that ever were spoken, the Greek and the Latin, there is no similar incumbrance of expression to be found. Secondly, The perpetual use of it in our language, is to us miserable poets, attended with two great inconveniences. Our verse consisting only of ten syllables, it not unfrequently happens that a fifth part of a line is to be engrossed and necessarily too, unless elision prevents it, by this abominable intruder, and, which is worse in my account, open vowels are continually the consequence——*The* element——*The* air, &c. Thirdly, The French who are equally with the English chargeable with barbarism in this particular, dispose of their *Le* and their *La* without ceremony, and always take care, that they shall be absorbed both in verse and in prose in the vowel, that immediately follows them. Fourthly, and I believe lastly, (and for your sake I wish it may prove so) the practice of cutting short *The* is warranted by Milton, who of all English poets that ever lived, had certainly the finest ear. Dr. Warton indeed has dared to say, that he had a bad one, for which he deserves, as far as critical de-

merit can deserve it, to lose his own. I thought I had done, but there is a fifthly behind; and it is this, That the custom of abbreviating *The*, belongs to the style, in which, in my advertisement annexed to the specimen, I profess to write. The use of that style would have warranted me in the practice of much greater liberty of this sort, than I ever intended to take. In perfect consistence with that style, I might say, I' th' tempest, I' th' door-way, &c. which however I would not allow myself to do, because I was aware that it would be objected to, and with reason. But it seems to me for the causes above said, that when I shorten *The*, before a vowel, or before *wh*, as in the line you mention,

" Than th' whole broad Hellespont in all its parts,"

my licence is not equally exceptionable, because *W*, though he rank, as a consonant, in the word *whole*, is not allowed to announce himself to the ear; and *H*, is an aspirate. But as I said at the beginning, so say I still, I am most willing to conform myself to your very sensible observation, that it is necessary, if we would please, to consult the taste of our own day; neither would I have pelted you, my dearest Cousin,

with any part of this volley of good reasons, had I not designed them as an answer to those objections, which you say, you have heard from others. But I only mention them. Though satisfactory to myself, I wave them, and will allow to *The* his whole dimensions, whensoever it can be done.

Thou only critic of my verse that is to be found in all the earth, whom I love, what shall I say in answer to your own objection to that passage,

> " Softly he placed his hand
> " On th' old man's hand, and pushed it gently away."

I can say neither more nor less than this, that when our dear friend, the General, sent me his opinion on the specimen, quoting those very words from it, he added: "With this part I was particularly pleased; there is nothing in poetry more descriptive." Such were his very words. Taste, my dear, is various, there is nothing so various, and even between persons of the best taste, there are diversities of opinion on the same subject, for which it is not possible to account. So much for these matters.

You advise me to consult the General, and to confide in him. I follow your advice, and have done

both. By the last post I asked his permission to send him the books of my Homer, as fast as I should finish them off. I shall be glad of his remarks, and more glad than of any thing, to do that which I hope may be agreeable to him. They will of course pass into your hands before they are sent to Johnson. The quire that I sent, is now in the hands of Johnson's friend. I intended to have told you in my last, but forgot it, that Johnson behaves very handsomely in the affair of my two volumes. He acts with a liberality not often found in persons of his occupation, and to mention it, when occasion calls me to it, is a justice due to him.

I am very much pleased with Mr. Stanley's letter——several compliments were paid me, on the subject of that first volume, by my own friends, but I do not recollect that I ever knew the opinion of a stranger about it before, whether favorable or otherwise: I only heard by a side wind, that it was very much read in Scotland, and more than here.

Farewell, my dearest Cousin, whom we expect; of whom we talk continually, and whom we continually long for.

W. C.

Your anxious wishes for my success delight me, and you may rest assured, my dear, that I have all the ambition on the subject, that you can wish me to feel. I more than admire my author. I often stand astonished at his beauties. I am for ever amused with the translation of him, and I have received a thousand encouragements. These are all so many happy omens that, I hope, shall be verified by the event.

LETTER CIX.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

March 13, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I seem to be about to write to you, but I foresee that it will not be a letter, but a scrap that I shall send you. I could tell you things, that, knowing how much you interest yourself in my success, I am sure would please you, but every moment of my leisure is necessarily spent at Troy. I am revising my translation, and bestow-

ing on it more labour than at first. At the repeated solicitation of General Cowper, who had doubtless irrefragable reason on his side, I have put my book into the hands of the most extraordinary critic that I have ever heard of. He is a Swiss; has an accurate knowledge of English, and for his knowledge of Homer, has, I verily believe, no fellow. Johnson recommended him to me. I am to send him the quires as fast as I finish them off, and the first is now in his hands. I have the comfort to be able to tell you, that he is very much pleased with what he has seen. Johnson wrote to me lately on purpose to tell me so. Things having taken this turn, I fear that I must beg a release from my engagement to put the MS. into your hands. I am bound to print as soon as three hundred shall have subscribed, and consequently have not an hour to spare.

People generally love to go where they are admired, yet Lady Hesketh complains of not having seen you.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER CX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

April 5, 1786.

I did, as you suppose, bestow all possible consideration on the subject of an apology for my Homerican undertaking. I turned the matter about in my mind an hundred different ways, and in every way, in which it would present itself, found it an impracticable business. It is impossible for me, with what delicacy soever I may manage it, to state the objections that lie against Pope's translation, without incurring odium, and the imputation of arrogance; foreseeing this danger, I choose to say nothing.

W. C.

P. S.——You may well wonder at my courage who have undertaken a work of such enormous length. You would wonder more if you knew that I translated the whole Iliad with no other help than a Clavis. But I have since equipped myself better for this immense journey, and am revising the work in company with a good commentator.

LETTER CXI.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, April 17, 1786.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

If you will not quote Solomon, my dearest Cousin, I will. He says, and as beautifully as truly—"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life!" I feel how much reason he had on his side when he made this observation, and am myself sick of your fortnight's delay.

* * * * * *

The vicarage was built by Lord Dartmouth, and was not finished till some time after we arrived at Olney, consequently it is new. It is a smart stone building well sashed, by much too good for the living, but just what I should wish for you. It has, as you justly concluded from my premises, a garden, but rather calculated for use than ornament. It is square, and well walled, but has neither arbour, nor alcove, nor other shade, except the shadow of the

house. But we have two gardens, which are yours. Between your mansion and ours is interposed nothing but an orchard, into which a door opening out of our garden, affords us the easiest communication imaginable, will save the round about by the town, and make both houses one. Your chamber-windows look over the river, and over the meadows, to a village called Emberton, and command the whole length of a long bridge, described by a certain poet, together with a view of the road at a distance. Should you wish for books at Olney, you must bring them with you, or you will wish in vain, for I have none but the works of a certain poet, Cowper, of whom perhaps you have heard, and they are as yet but two volumes. They may multiply hereafter, but at present they are no more.

You are the first person for whom I have heard Mrs. Unwin express such feelings as she does for you. She is not profuse in professions, nor forward to enter into treaties of friendship with new faces, but when her friendship is once engaged, it may be confided in, even unto death. She loves you already, and how much more, will she love you, before this time twelve-month! I have indeed endeavoured to describe you to her, but perfectly as I have you by

heart, I am sensible that my picture cannot do you justice. I never saw one that did. Be you what you may, you are much beloved, and will be so at Olney, and Mrs. U. expects you, with the pleasure, that one feels at the return of a long absent, dear relation; that is to say, with a pleasure such as mine. She sends you her warmest affections.

On Friday, I received a letter from dear Anonymous, apprising me of a parcel, that the coach would bring me on Sunday. Who is there in the world that has, or thinks he has, reason to love me to the degree that he does? But it is no matter. He chooses to be unknown, and his choice is, and ever shall be, so sacred to me, that if his name lay on the table before me reversed, I would not turn the paper about that I might read it. Much as it would gratify me to thank him, I would turn my eyes away from the forbidden discovery. I long to assure him that those same eyes, concerning which he expresses such kind apprehensions, lest they should suffer by this laborious undertaking, are as well as I could expect them to be; if I were never to touch either book or pen. Subject to weakness, and occasional slight inflammations, it is probable that they will always be, but I cannot remember the time when they enjoyed

any thing so like an exemption from those infirmities as at present. One would almost suppose, that reading Homer were the best ophthalmic in the world. I should be happy to remove his solicitude on the subject, but it is a pleasure that he will not let me enjoy. Well then, I will be content without it; and so content, that though I believe you my dear, to be in full possession of all this mystery, you shall never know me, while you live, either directly, or by hints of any sort, attempt to extort, or to steal the secret from you. I should think myself as justly punishable as the Bethshemites, for looking into the ark, which they were not allowed to touch.

I have not sent for Kerr, for Kerr can do nothing but send me to Bath, and to Bath I cannot go for a thousand reasons. The summer will set me up again; I grow fat every day, and shall be as big as Gog or Magog, or both put together, before you come.

I did actually live three years with Mr. Chapman, a solicitor, that is to say, I slept three years in his house, but I lived, that is to say, I spent my days in Southampton-Row, as you very well remember. There was I, and the future Lord Chancellor, constantly employed from morning to night in giggling,

and making giggle, instead of studying the law. Oh fie, Cousin! how could you do so? I am pleased with Lord Thurlow's inquiries about me. If he takes it into that inimitable head of his, he may make a man of me yet. I could love him heartily, if he would deserve it at my hands. That I did so once is certain. The Duchess of ———, who in the world set her agoing? But if all the duchesses in the world were spinning, like so many whirligigs, for my benefit, I would not stop them. It is a noble thing to be a poet, it makes all the world so lively. I might have preached more sermons than even Tillotson did, and better, and the world would have been still fast asleep, but a volume of verse is a fiddle, that puts the universe in motion.

Yours,

My dear friend, and Cousin,

W. C.

LETTER CXII.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, April 24, 1786.

Your letters are so much my comfort, that I often tremble, lest by any accident I should be disappointed; and the more because you have been, more than once, so engaged in company on the writing day, that I have had a narrow escape. Let me give you a piece of good counsel, my Cousin; Follow my laudable example, write when you can, take Time's forelock in one hand, and a pen in the other, and so make sure of your opportunity. It is well for me that you write faster than any body, and more in an hour, than other people in two, else I know not what would become of me. When I read your letters, I hear you talk, and I love talking letters dearly, especially from you. Well! the middle of June will not be always a thousand years off, and when it comes I shall hear you, and see you too, and shall not care a farthing then if you do not touch a pen in a month. By the way, you must either send me, or bring me some more paper,

for before the moon shall have performed a few more revolutions, I shall not have a scrap left, and tedious revolutions they are just now, that is certain.

I give you leave to be as peremptory as you please, especially at a distance; but when you say that you are a Cowper, (and the better it is for the Cowpers that such you are, and I give them joy of you, with all my heart) you must not forget, that I boast myself a Cowper too, and have my humours, and fancies, and purposes, and determinations, as well as others of my name, and hold them as fast as they can. *You* indeed tell *me* how often I shall see you when you come. A pretty story truly. I am an *he* Cowper, my dear, and claim the privileges that belong to my noble sex. But these matters shall be settled as my Cousin Agamemnon used to say, at a more convenient time.

I shall rejoice to see the letter you promise me, for though I met with a morsel of praise last week, I do not know that the week current is likely to produce me any, and having lately been pretty much pampered with that diet, I expect to find myself rather hungry by the time when your next letter shall arrive. It will therefore be very opportune. The morsel above alluded to, came from—whom do you

think? From———, but she desires that her authorship may be a secret. And in my answer, I promised not to divulge it, except to you. It is a pretty copy of verses, neatly written, and well turned, and when you come, you shall see them. I intend to keep all pretty things to myself till then, that they may serve me as a bait to lure you hither more effectually. The last letter that I had from———, I received so many years since, that it seems as if it had reached me a good while before I was born.

I was grieved at the heart that the General could not come, and that illness was in part the cause that hindered him. I have sent him by his express desire, a new edition of the first book, and half the second. He would not suffer me to send it to you, my dear, lest you should post it away to Maty at once. He did not give that reason, but, being shrewd, I found it.

The grass begins to grow, and the leaves to bud, and every thing is preparing to be beautiful, against you come.

Adieu,

W. C.

You enquire of our walks, I perceive, as well as our rides. They are beautiful. You enquire also concerning a cellar. You have two cellars. Oh! what years have passed since we took the same walks, and drank out of the same bottle! but a few more weeks and then!

LETTER CXIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, May 8, 1786.

I did not at all doubt that your tenderness for my feelings had inclined you to suppress in your letters to me the intelligence concerning Maty's critique, that yet reached me from another quarter. When I wrote to you I had not learned it from the General, but from my friend Bull, who only knew it by hear-say. The next post brought me the news of it from the first-mentioned, and the critique itself inclosed. Together with it came also a squib discharged against me in the Public Advertizer. The General's letter found me in one of my

most melancholy moods, and my spirits did not rise on the receipt of it. The letter indeed that he had cut from the news-paper gave me little pain, both because it contained nothing formidable, though written with malevolence enough, and because a nameless author can have no more weight with his readers than the reason which he has on his side can give him. But Maty's animadversions hurt me more. In part they appeared to me unjust, and in part ill-natured, and yet the man himself being an oracle in every body's account, I apprehended that he had done me much mischief. Why he says that the translation is far from exact, is best known to himself. For I know it to be as exact as is compatible with poetry; and prose translations of Homer are not wanted, the world has one already. But I will not fill my letter to you with hyper-criticisms, I will only add an extract from a letter of Colman's, that I received last Friday, and will then dismiss the subject. It came accompanied by a copy of the specimen which he himself had amended, and with so much taste and candour that it charmed me. He says as follows:

"One copy I have returned, with some remarks prompted by my zeal for your success, not, Heaven knows, by arrogance or impertinence. I

know no other way at once so plain, and so short, of delivering my thoughts on the specimen of your translation, which on the whole I admire exceedingly, thinking it breathes the spirit, and conveys the manner of the original; though having here neither Homer, nor Pope's Homer, I cannot speak precisely of particular lines or expressions, or compare your blank verse with his rhyme, except by declaring that I think blank verse infinitely more congenial to the magnificent simplicity of Homer's hexameters, than the confined couplets, and the jingle of rhyme."——

His amendments are chiefly bestowed on the lines encumbered with elisions, and I will just take this opportunity to tell you, my dear, because I know you to be as much interested in what I write as myself, that some of the most offensive of those elisions were occasioned by mere criticism. I was fairly hunted into them, by vexatious objections made without end, by ——, and his friend, and altered, and altered, till at last I did not care how I altered. Many thanks for ——'s verses, which deserve just the character you give of them. They are neat and easy—but I would mumble her well, if I could get at her, for allowiug herself to suppose for a moment, that I praised the Chancellor, with a view to emolu-

ment. I wrote those stanzas merely for my own amusement, and they slept in a dark closet, years after I composed them; not in the least designed for publication. But when Johnson had printed off the longer pieces, of which the first volume principally consists, he wrote me word that he wanted yet two thousand lines, to swell it to a proper size. On that occasion, it was that I collected every scrap of verse that I could find, and that among the the rest. None of the smaller poems had been introduced, or had been published at all, with my name, but for this necessity.

Just as I wrote the last word, I was called down to Dr. Kerr, who came to pay me a voluntary visit. Were I sick, his cheerful and friendly manner would almost restore me. Air and exercise are his theme; them he recommends as the best physic for me, and in all weathers. Come therefore, my dear, and take a little of this good physic with me, for you will find it beneficial as well as I; come and assist Mrs. Unwin in the re-establishment of your Cousin's health. Air and exercise, and she and you together, will make me a perfect Samson. You will have a good house over your head, comfortable apartments, obliging neighbours, good roads, a pleasant country, and in

us your constant companions, two who will love you, and do already love you dearly, and with all our hearts. If you are in any danger of trouble, it is from myself, if my fits of dejection seize me; and as often as they do, you will be grieved for me; but perhaps by your assistance I shall be able to resist them better. If there is a creature under Heaven, from whose co-operations, with Mrs. Unwin, I can reasonably expect such a blessing, that creature is yourself. I was not without such attacks when I lived in London, though, at that time, they were less oppressive, but in your company I was never unhappy a whole day, in all my life.

Of how much importance is an author to himself! I return to that abominable specimen again, just to notice Maty's impatient censure of the repetition, that you mention. I mean of the word *hand*. In the original there is not a repetition of it. But to repeat a word in that manner, and on such an occasion, is by no means, what he calls it, a *modern* invention. In Homer I could shew him many such, and in Virgil they abound. Colman, who, in his judgment of classical matters, is inferior to none, says, "*I know not why Maty objects to this expression.*" I could easily change it. But, the case standing thus, I

know not, whether my proud stomach will condescend so low. I rather feel myself disinclined to it.

One evening last week, Mrs. Unwin and I took our walk to Weston, and, as we were returning through the grove opposite the house, the Throckmorton's presented themselves at the door. They are owners of a house at Weston, at present empty. It is a very good one, infinitely superior to ours. When we drank chocolate with them, they both expressed their ardent desire that we would take it, wishing to have us for nearer neighbours. If you, my Cousin, were not so well provided for as you are, and at our very elbow, I verily believe I should have mustered all my rhetoric to recommend it to you. You might have it for ever without danger of ejectment, whereas your possession of the vicarage depends on the life of the vicar, who is eighty-six. The environs are most beautiful, and the village itself one of the prettiest I ever saw. Add to this, you would step immediately into Mr. Throckmorton's pleasure-ground, where you would not soil your slipper even in winter. A most unfortunate mistake was made by that gentleman's bailiff in his absence. Just before he left Weston last year for the winter, he gave him orders to cut short

the tops of the flowering shrubs, that lined a serpentine walk in a delightful grove, celebrated by my poetship in a little piece, that (you remember) was called the Shrubbery. The dunce, misapprehending the order, cut down and faggotted up the whole grove, leaving neither tree, bush, nor twig; nothing but stumps about as high as my ankle. Mrs. T. told us that she never saw her husband so angry in his life. I judge indeed by his physiognomy, which has great sweetness in it, that he is very little addicted to that infernal passion. But, had he cudgelled the man for his cruel blunder, and the havoc made in consequence of it, I could have excused him.

I felt myself really concerned for the Chancellor's illness, and from what I learned of it, both from the papers, and from General Cowper, concluded that he must die. I am accordingly delighted in the same proportion with the news of his recovery. May he live, and live to be still the support of Government! If it shall be his good pleasure to render me personally any material service, I have no objection to it. But Heaven knows, that it is impossible for any living wight to bestow less thought on that subject than myself.—May God be ever with you, my beloved Cousin! W. C.

LETTER CXIV.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, May 15, 1786.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

From this very morning I begin to date the last month of our long separation, and confidently and most comfortably hope, that before the fifteenth of June shall present itself, we shall have seen each other. Is it not so? And will it not be one of the most extraordinary eras of my extraordinary life? A year ago, we neither corresponded, nor expected to meet in this world. But this world is a scene of marvellous events, many of them more marvellous than fiction itself would dare to hazard; and (blessed be God!) they are not all of the distressing kind. Now and then in the course of an existence, whose hue is for the most part sable, a day turns up, that makes amends for many sighs and many subjects of complaint. Such a day shall I account the day of your arrival at Olney.

Wherefore is it, (canst thou tell me?) that together with all those delightful sensations, to which the sight of a long absent dear friend gives birth, there

is a mixture of something painful, flutterings, and tumults, and I know not what accompaniments of our pleasure, that are in fact perfectly foreign from the occasion? Such I feel, when I think of our meeting, and such, I suppose, feel you; and the nearer the crisis approaches, the more I am sensible of them. I know, beforehand, that they will increase with every turn of the wheels, that shall convey me to Newport, when I shall set out to meet you, and that when we actually meet, the pleasure, and this unaccountable pain together, will be as much as I shall be able to support. I am utterly at a loss for the cause, and can only resolve it into that appointment, by which it has been fore-ordained, that all human delights shall be qualified and mingled with their contraries. For there is nothing formidable in you. To me at least there is nothing such, no, not even in your menaces, unless when you threaten me to write no more. Nay, I verily believe, did I not know you to be what you are, and had less affection for you than I have, I should have fewer of these emotions, of which I would have none, if I could help it. But a fig for them all! Let us resolve to combat with, and to conquer them. They are dreams. They are illusions of the judgment. Some enemy, that hates the happiness of

human kind, and is ever industrious to dash it, works them in us ; and their being so perfectly unreasonable as they are is a proof of it. Nothing, that is such, can be the work of a good agent. This I know too by experience, that, like all other illusions, they exist only by force of imagination, are indebted for their prevalence to the absence of their object, and in a few moments after its appearance cease. So then this is a settled point, and the case stands thus. You will tremble as you draw near to Newport, and so shall I. But we will both recollect, that there is no reason why we should, and this recollection will, at least, have some little effect in our favor. We will likewise both take the comfort of what we know to be true, that the tumult will soon cease, and the pleasure long survive the pain, even as long, I trust, as we ourselves shall survive it.

What you say of Maty gives me all the consolation that you intended. We both think it highly probable that you suggest the true cause of his displeasure, when you suppose him mortified at not having had a part of the translation laid before him, ere the specimen was published. The General was very much hurt, and calls his censures harsh and unreasonable. He likewise sent me a consolatory let-

ter on the occasion, in which he took the kindest pains to heal the wound, that (he supposed) I might have suffered. I am not naturally insensible, and the sensibilities that I had by nature, have been wonderfully enhanced by a long series of shocks, given to a frame of nerves that was never very athletic. I feel accordingly, whether painful or pleasant, in the extreme, am easily elevated, and easily cast down. The frown of a critic freezes my poetical powers, and discourages me, to a degree, that makes me ashamed of my own weakness. Yet I presently recover my confidence again. The half of what you so kindly say in your last, would at any time restore my spirits, and, being said by you, is infallible. I am not ashamed to confess, that having commenced an author, I am most abundantly desirous to succeed as such. *I have (what perhaps you little suspect me of) in my nature an infinite share of ambition.* But with it, I have at the same time, as you well know, an equal share of diffidence. To this combination of opposite qualities it has been owing, that till lately, I stole through life without undertaking any thing, yet always wishing to distinguish myself. At last I ventured, ventured too in the only path that, at so late a period, was yet open to me, and am determined, if God have

not determined otherwise, to work my way through the obscurity, that has been so long my portion, into notice. Every thing, therefore, that seems to threaten this my favorite purpose with disappointment, affects me nearly. I suppose that all ambitious minds are in the same predicament. He who seeks distinction must be sensible of disapprobation, exactly in the same proportion as he desires applause. And now, my precious Cousin, I have unfolded my heart to you in this particular, without a speck of dissimulation. Some people, and good people too, would blame me. But you will not; and they (I think) would blame without just cause. We certainly do not honor God, when we bury, or when we neglect to improve, as far as we may, whatever talent he may have bestowed on us, whether it be little or much. In natural things, as well as in spiritual, it is a never-failing truth, that to him, who *hath*, (that is to him that occupies what he hath diligently and so as to increase it) more shall be given. Set me down therefore, my dear, for an industrious rhymer, so long as I shall have the ability. For in this only way is it possible for me, so far as I can see, either to honor God, or to serve man, or even to serve myself.

I rejoice to hear that Mr. Throckmorton wishes

to be on a more intimate footing. I am shy, and suspect that he is not very much otherwise, and the consequence has been, that we have mutually wished an acquaintance without being able to accomplish it. Blessings on you for the hint, that you dropped on the subject of the house at Weston! For the burthen of my song is——"Since we have met once again, let us never be separated, as we have been, more."

W. C.

LETTER CXV.

To the Rev. WALTER BAGOT.

Olney, May 20, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

About three weeks since I met your Sister Chester at Mr. Throckmorton's, and from her learned that you are at Blithfield, and in health. Upon the encouragement of this information it is that I write now; I should not otherwise have known with certainty where to find you, or have been equally free from the fear of unseasonable intrusion. May God be with you, my friend, and give you a just measure

of submission to his will, the most effectual of all remedies for the evils of this changing scene. I doubt not that he has granted you this blessing already, and may he still continue it!

Now I will talk a little about myself. For except myself, living in this *Terrarum angulo*, what can I have to talk about? In a scene of perfect tranquillity, and the profoundest silence, I am kicking up the dust of heroic narrative, and besieging Troy again. I told you, that I had almost finished the translation of the Iliad; and I verily thought so. But I was never more mistaken. By the time, when I had reached the end of the poem, the first book of my version was a twelvemonth old. When I came to consider it after having laid it by so long, it did not satisfy me. I set myself to mend it, and I did so. But still it appeared to me improveable, and that nothing would so effectually secure that point, as to give the whole book a new translation. With the exception of very few lines I have so done, and was never in my life so convinced of the soundness of Horace's advice to publish nothing in haste; so much advantage have I derived from doing that twice which I thought I had accomplished notably at once. He indeed recommends nine years' imprisonment of your verses before you

send them abroad; but the ninth part of that time, is, I believe, as much as there is need of to open a man's eyes upon his own defects, and to secure him from the danger of premature self-approbation. Neither ought it to be forgotten that nine years make so wide an interval between the cup and the lip, that a thousand things may fall out between. New engagements may occur, which may make the finishing of that, which a poet has begun, impossible. In nine years he may rise into a situation, or he may sink into one, utterly incompatible with his purpose. His constitution may break in nine years, and sickness may disqualify him for improving what he enterprised in the days of health. His inclination may change, and he may find some other employment more agreeable, or another poet may enter upon the same work, and get the start of him. Therefore, my friend Horace, though I acknowledge your principle to be good, I must confess that I think the practice you would ground upon it, carried to an extreme. The rigour that I exercised upon the first book, I intend to exercise upon all that follow, and have now actually advanced into the middle of the seventh, no where admitting more than one line in fifty of the first translation. You must not imagine that I had

been careless and hasty in the first instance. In truth I had not; but in rendering so excellent a poet as Homer into our language, there are so many points to be attended to both in respect of language and numbers, that a first attempt must be fortunate indeed if it does not call loud for a second. You saw the specimen, and you saw (I am sure) one great fault in it; I mean the harshness of some of the elisions. I do not altogether take the blame of these to myself, for into some of them I was actually driven and hunted by a series of reiterated objections made by a critical friend, whose scruples and delicacies teazed me out of all my patience. But no such monsters will be found in the volume.

Your Brother Chester has furnished me with Barnes's Homer, from whose notes I collect here and there some useful information, and whose fair and legible type preserves me from the danger of being as blind as was my author. I saw a Sister of yours at Mr. Throckmorton's, but I am not good at making myself heard across a large room, and therefore nothing passed between us. I felt however, that she was my friend's Sister, and much esteemed her for your sake.

Ever yours, W. C.

P. S.—The swan is called *argutus* (I suppose) *a non arguendo,* and *canorus a non canendo.* But whether he be dumb or vocal, more poetical than the eagle or less, it is no matter. A feather of either, in token of your approbation and esteem, will never, you must rest assured, be an offence to me.

LETTER CXVI.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, May 25, 1786.

I have at length, my Cousin, found my way into my summer abode. I believe that I described it to you some time since, and will therefore now leave it undescribed. I will only say that I am writing in a band-box, situated, at least in my account, delightfully, because it has a window in one side that opens into that orchard, through which as I am sitting here, I shall see you often pass, and which therefore I already prefer to all the orchards in the world. You do well to prepare me for all possible delays, because in this life all sorts of disappointments

are possible, and I shall do well, if any such delay of your journey should happen, to practice that lesson of patience which you inculcate. But it is a lesson, which even with you for my teacher, I shall be slow to learn. Being sure however that you will not procrastinate without cause, I will make myself as easy as I can about it, and hope the best. To convince you how much I am under discipline, and good advice, I will lay aside a favorite measure, influenced in doing so by nothing but the good sense of your contrary opinion. I had set my heart on meeting you at Newport. In my haste to see you once again, I was willing to overlook many awkwardnesses I could not but foresee would attend it. I put them aside so long as I only foresaw them myself, but since I find that you foresee them too, I can no longer deal so slightly with them. It is therefore determined that we meet at Olney. Much I shall feel, but I will not die if I can help it, and I beg that you will take all possible care to outlive it likewise, for I know what it is to be balked in the moment of acquisition, and should be loth to know it again.

Last Monday in the evening we walked to Weston, according to our usual custom. It happened, owing to a mistake of time, that we set out half an

hour sooner than usual. This mistake we discovered, while we were in the wilderness. So, finding, that we had time before us, as they say, Mrs. Unwin proposed, that we should go into the village, and take a view of the house, that I had just mentioned to you. We did so, and found it such a one as in most respects would suit you well. But Moses Brown, our vicar, who, as I told you, is in his eighty-sixth year, is not bound to die for that reason. He said himself, when he was here last summer, that he should live ten years longer, and for ought that appears so he may. In which case, for the sake of its near neighbourhood to us, the vicarage has charms for me that no other place can rival. But this, and a thousand things more, shall be talked over when you come.

We have been industriously cultivating our acquaintance with our Weston neighbours since I wrote last, and they on their part have been equally diligent in the same cause. I have a notion that we shall all suit well. I see much in them both that I admire. You know perhaps that they are Catholics.

It is a delightful bundle of praise, my Cousin, that you have sent me. All jasmine and lavender. Whoever the lady is, she has evidently an admirable pen, and a cultivated mind. If a person reads, it is

no matter in what language, and if the mind be informed, it is no matter whether that mind belongs to a man or a woman. The taste, and the judgment, will receive the benefit alike in both. Long before the Task was published, I made an experiment one day, being in a frolicksome mood, upon my friend:—We were walking in the garden, and conversing on a subject similar to these lines—

> The few that pray at all, pray oft' amiss,
> And seeking grace t'improve the present good,
> Would urge a wiser suit than asking more.

I repeated them, and said to him with an air of *nonchalance*, "Do you recollect those lines? I have seen them somewhere, where are they? He put on a considering face, and after some deliberation replied—"Oh, I will tell you where they must be—in the Night-Thoughts." I was glad my trial turned out so well, and did not undeceive him. I mention this occurrence only in confirmation of the letter-writer's opinion, but at the same time I do assure you, on the faith of an honest man, that I never in my life designed an imitation of Young, or of any

other writer; for mimicry is my abhorrence, at least in poetry.

Assure yourself, my dearest Cousin, that both for your sake, since you make a point of it, and for my own, I will be as philosophically careful as possible that these fine nerves of mine shall not be beyond measure agitated, when you arrive. In truth, there is much greater probability that they will be benefitted, and greatly too. Joy of heart, from whatever occasion it may arise, is the best of all nervous medicines, and I should not wonder if such a turn given to my spirits, should have even a lasting effect, of the most advantageous kind, upon them. You must not imagine neither, that I am on the whole in any great degree subject to nervous affections; occasionally I am, and have been these many years much liable to dejection. But at intervals, and sometimes for an interval of weeks, no creature would suspect it. For I have not that which commonly is a symptom of such a case belonging to me: I mean extraordinary elevation in the absence of Mr. Bluedevil. When I am in the best health, my tide of animal sprightliness flows with great equality, so that I am never, at any time, exalted in proportion as I am sometimes depressed. My depression has a cause,

and if that cause were to cease, I should be as cheerful thenceforth, and perhaps for ever, as any man need be. But, as I have often said, Mrs. Unwin shall be my expositor.

Adieu, my beloved Cousin. God grant that our friendship, which while we could see each other, never suffered a moment's interruption, and which so long a separation has not in the least abated, may glow in us to our last hour, and be renewed in a better world, there to be perpetuated for ever.

For you must know that I should not love you half so well, if I did not believe, you would be my friend to eternity. There is not room enough for friendship to unfold itself in full bloom, in such a nook of life as this. Therefore I am, and must, and will be,

Yours for ever,

W. C.

LETTER CXVII

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, May 29, 1786.

Thou dear, comfortable Cousin, whose letters among all that I receive, have this property peculiarly their own, that I expect them without trembling, and never find any thing in them that does not give me pleasure; for which, therefore, I would take nothing in exchange, that the world could give me, save, and except that, for which I must exchange them soon, (and happy shall I be to do so) your own company. That, indeed, is delayed a little too long: to my impatience, at least, it seems so, who find the spring, backward as it is, too forward, because many of its beauties will have faded before you will have an apportunity to see them. We took our customary walk yesterday in the wilderness at Weston, and saw, with regret, the laburnums, syringas, and guelder-roses, some of them blown, and others just upon the point of blowing, and could not help observing——all these will be gone before Lady Hesketh comes. Still, however, there will be

roses, and jasmine, and honey-suckle, and shady walks, and cool alcoves, and you will partake them with us. But I want you to have a share of every thing that is delightful here, and cannot bear that the advance of the season should steal away a single pleasure before you can come to enjoy it.

Every day I think of you, and almost all day long; I will venture to say, that even *you* were never so expected in your life. I called last week at the Quaker's to see the furniture of your bed, the fame of which had reached me. It is, I assure you, superb, of printed cotton, and the subject classical. Every morning you will open your eyes on Phaeton kneeling to Apollo, and imploring his father to grant him the conduct of his chariot for a day. May your sleep be as sound, as your bed will be sumptuous, and your nights, at least, will be well provided for.

I shall send up the sixth and seventh books of the Iliad shortly, and shall address them to you. You will forward them to the General. I long to shew you my workshop, and to see you sitting on the opposite side of my table. We shall be as close packed as two wax figures in an old fashioned picture frame. I am writing in it now. It is the place in which I fabricate all my verse in summer time. I rose an hour

sooner than usual, this morning, that I might finish my sheet before breakfast, for I must write this day to the General.

The grass, under my windows, is all bespangled with dew-drops, and the birds are singing in the apple trees, among the blossoms. Never poet had a more commodious oratory, in which, to invoke his Muse.

I have made your heart ache too often, my poor dear Cousin, with talking about my fits of dejection. Something has happened that has led me to the subject, or I would have mentioned them more sparingly. Do not suppose, or suspect, that I treat you with reserve, there is nothing, in which I am concerned, that you shall not be made acquainted with. But the tale is too long for a letter. I will only add, for your present satisfaction, that the cause is not exterior, that it is not within the reach of human aid, and that yet I have a hope myself, and Mrs. Unwin a strong persuasion of its removal. I am indeed even now, and have been for a considerable time, sensible of a change for the better, and expect, with good reason, a comfortable lift from you. Guess then, my beloved Cousin, with what wishes I look forward to the time of your arrival, from whose coming I promise

myself, not only pleasure, but peace of mind, at least an additional share of it. At present it is an uncertain and transient guest with me, but the joy with which I shall see, and converse with, you at Olney, perhaps, make it an abiding one.

W. C.

LETTER CXVIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, June 4 and 5, 1786.

Ah! my cousin, you begin already to fear and quake. What a hero am I, compared with you. I have no fears of *you*. On the contrary am as bold as a lion. I wish that your carriage were even now at the door. You should soon see, with how much courage I would face you. But what cause have you for fear? Am I not your Cousin, with whom you have wandered in the fields of Freemantle, and at Bevis's mount? Who used to read to you, laugh with you, till our sides have ached, at any thing, or nothing? And am I in these re-

spects at all altered? You will not find me so; but just as ready to laugh, and to wander, as you ever knew me. A cloud, perhaps, may come over me now and then, for a few hours, but from clouds I was never exempted. And are not you the identical Cousin with whom I have performed all these feats? The very Harriet whom I saw, for the first time, at De Grey's in Norfolk-street? (It was on a Sunday, when you came with my Uncle and Aunt to drink tea there, and I had dined there, and was just going back to Westminster.) If these things are so, and I am sure that you cannot gainsay a syllable of them all, then this consequence follows; that I do not promise myself more pleasure from your company than I shall be sure to find. Then you are my Cousin, in whom I always delighted, and in whom I doubt not, that I shall delight, even to my latest hour. But this wicked coach-maker has sunk my spirits. What a miserable thing it is to depend, in any degree, for the accomplishment of a wish, and that wish so fervent, on the punctuality of a creature, who, I suppose, was never punctual in his life! Do tell him, my dear, in order to quicken him, that if he performs his promise, he shall make my coach

when I want one, and that if he performs it not, I will most assuredly employ some other man.

The Throckmortons' sent a note to invite us to dinner—we went, and a very agreeable day we had. They made no fuss with us, which I was heartily glad to see, for where I give trouble, I am sure that I cannot be welcome. Themselves, and their chaplain, and we, were all the party. After dinner we had much cheerful and pleasant talk, the particulars of which might not perhaps be so entertaining upon paper, therefore, all but one, I will omit, and that I will mention only because it will of itself be sufficient to give you an insight into their opinion on a very important subject—their own religion. I happened to say, that in all professions and trades, mankind affected an air of mystery. Physicians, I observed, in particular, were objects of that remark, who persist in prescribing in Latin, many times, no doubt, to the hazard of a patient's life, through the ignorance of an apothecary. Mr. Trockmorton assented to what I said, and turning to his chaplain, to my infinite surprise, observed to him, "*That is just as absurd as our praying in Latin.*" I could have hugged him for his liberality, and freedom from bigotry, but thought it rather more decent to let the matter pass without

any visible notice. I therefore heard it with pleasure, and kept my pleasure to myself. The two ladies in the mean time were à tête-à-tête in the drawing-room. Their conversation turned principally (as I afterwards learned from Mrs. Unwin) on a most delightful topic, viz. myself. In the first place, Mrs. Throckmorton admired my book, from which she quoted by heart more than I could repeat, though I so lately wrote it. In short, my dear, I cannot proceed to relate what she said of the book, and the book's author, for that abominable modesty that I cannot even yet get rid of. Let it suffice to say, that you, who are disposed to love every body, who speaks kindly of your Cousin, will certainly love Mrs. Throckmorton, when you shall be told what she said of him, and that you *will* be told is equally certain, because it depends on Mrs. Unwin. It is a very convenient thing to have a Mrs. Unwin, who will tell you many a good long story for me, that I am not able to tell for myself. I am however not at all in arrears to our neighbours in the matter of admiration and esteem, but the more I know, the more I like them, and have nearly an affection for them both. I am delighted that the Task has so large a share of the approbation of your sensible Suffolk friend.

I received yesterday from the General, another letter of T. S. An unknown auxiliary having started up in my behalf, I believe I shall leave the business of answering to him, having no leisure myself for controversy. He lies very open to a very effectual reply.

My dearest Cousin adieu! I hope to write to you but once more before we meet. But Oh! this couch-maker, and Oh! this holiday week!

Yours, with impatient desire to see you,

W. C.

LETTER CXIX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

Olney, June 9, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The little time that I can devote to any other purpose than that of poetry, is a you may suppose stolen. Homer is urgent. Much is done, but much remains undone, and no school-boy is more attentive to the performance of his daily

task than I am. You will therefore excuse me, if, at present, I am both unfrequent and short.

The paper tells me that the Chancellor has relapsed, and I am truly sorry to hear it. The first attack was dangerous, but a second must be more formidable still. It is not probable that I should ever hear from him again if he survive; yet of the much that I should have felt for him, had our connexion never been interrupted, I still feel much. Every body will feel the loss of a man, whose abilities have made him of such general importance.

I correspond again with Colman, and upon the most friendly footing, and find in his instance, and in some others, that an intimate intercourse, which has been only casually suspended, not forfeited on either side by outrage, is capable not only of revival, but improvement.

I had a letter some time since from your Sister Fanny, that gave me great pleasure. Such notices from old friends are always pleasant, and of such pleasures I have received many lately. They refresh the remembrance of early days, and make me young again. The noble institution of the Nonsense Club, will be forgotten when we are gone who composed it, but I often think of your most heroic line, writ-

ter at one of our meetings, and especially think of it when I am translating Homer.

"To whom replied the Devil yard-long-tail'd."

There never was any thing more truly Grecian than that triple epithet, and were it possible to introduce it into either Iliad or Odyssey I should certainly steal it. I am now flushed with expectation of Lady Hesketh, who spends the summer with us. We hope to see her next week. We have found admirable lodgings both for her, and her suite, and a Quaker in this town, still more admirable than they, who, as if he loved her as much as I do, furnishes them for her with real elegance.

W. C.

The letters which I have just imparted to my reader, exhibit a picture so minute, and so admirable, of the life, the studies, and the affections of Cowper, during the period to which they relate, that they require no comment from his biographer. They must render all who read them intimately acquainted with the writer, and the result of such intimacy must be, what it is at once my duty, and my delight, to promote, an increase of public affection for his enchanting character, an effect which all his posthumous compositions are excellently suited to extend and confirm!

It is now incumbent on me to relate the consequences of a visit so fondly expected by the poet, and happily productive of a change in his local situation.

It does not always happen, when the heart and fancy have indulged themselves with such fervency in a prospect of delight, from the renewed society of a long absent friend, it does not always happen that the pleasure on its arrival proves exactly what it promised to be on its approach. But in the present case, to the honor of the two friends concerned, the delightful vision was followed by a reality of delight. Cowper was truly happy in receiving, and settling,

his beloved, though long unseen, relation, as his neighbour; she was comfortably lodged in the vicarage of Olney, a mansion so near to his residence, and so commodious from the private communication between their two houses, that the long separated, and most seasonably re-united friends, here enjoyed all the easy intercourse of a domestic union.

Cowper derived from this fortunate event not only the advantage of daily conversation with another cultivated mind, in affectionate unison with his own, but as his new neighbour had brought her carriage and horses to Olney, he was gradually tempted to survey, in a wider range, the face of a country that he loved, and to mix a little more with its most worthy inhabitants. His life had been so retired at Olney, that he had not even extended his excursions to the neighbouring town of Newport-Pagnell in the course of many years; but the convenience of a carriage, induced him, in August, to visit Mr. Bull, who resided there—the friend to whose assiduous attention he had felt himself much obliged in a season of mental depression. A few letters of Cowper to this gentleman are so expressive of cordial esteem, and so agreeably illustrate the character of each, that I shall take this opportunity of making a short selection

from the private papers, of which the kindness of the person to whom they are addressed, has enabled me to avail myself. When Cowper published the first volume of his Poems, Mr. Bull wrote to him on the occasion: The answer of the poet, March 24, 1782, I reserve for a future part of my work. A subsequent letter, dated, October 27th in the same year, opens with this lively paragraph:——

"*Mon aimable and très cher Ami,*

"It is not in the power of "chaises, or chariots, to carry you, where my affec- "tions will not follow you; if I heard, that you "were gone to finish your days in the Moon, I "should not love you the less; but should contem- "plate the place of your abode, as often as it ap- "peared in the Heavens, and say—Farewell, my "friend, for ever! Lost! but not forgotten! Live "happy in thy lanthern, and smoke the remainder "of thy pipes in peace! Thou art rid of earth, "at least of all its cares, and so far can I rejoice in "thy removal; and as to the cares that are to be "found in the Moon, I am resolved to suppose "them lighter than those below——heavier they "can hardly be."

The letter closes with a sentence, that ascertains the date of those translations from the poetry of Madame Guion, which I have already mentioned, as executed at the request of Mr. Bull.—"Madame Guion is finished, but not quite transcribed." In a subsequent letter he speaks of these, and of other poems. I insert the passage, and a preceding paragraph in which he expatiates on thunder-storms with the feelings of a poet, and with his usual felicity of expression.——"I was always an admirer of thun-
"der-storms, even before I knew, whose voice I
"heard in them; but especially an admirer of thun-
"der rolling over the great waters. There is some-
"thing singularly majestic in the sound of it at sea,
"where the eye and the ear have uninterrupted op-
"portunity of observation, and the concavity above
"being made spacious reflects it with more advan-
"tage, I have consequently envied you your situa-
"tion, and the enjoyment of those refreshing breezes,
"that belong to it We have indeed been regaled
"with some of the bursts of ætherial music.—The
"peals have been as loud, by the report of a gentle-
"man, who lived many years in the West-Indies, as
"were ever heard in those islands, and the flashes as

" spendid. But when the thunder preaches, an ho-
" rizon bounded by the ocean is the only sounding-
" board."

" I have had but little leisure, strange as it
" may seem, and that little I devoted for a month
" after your departure to Madame Guion. I have
" made fair copies of all the pieces I have produced
" on this last occasion, and will put them into your
" hands, when we meet. They are yours, to serve
" you as you please; you may take, and leave, as
" you like, for my purpose is already served; they
" have amused me, and I have no farther demand
" upon them. The lines upon Friendship however,
" which were not sufficiently of a piece with the
" others, will not now be wanted. I have some
" other little things, which I will communicate when
" time shall serve; but I cannot now transcribe
" them."

What the author here modestly calls, "The lines on Friendship," I regard as one of the most admirable among his minor poems. Mr. Bull, who has been induced to print the translations from Madame Guion, by an apprehension of their being surreptitiously and inaccurately published, has inserted these stanzas on Friendship, in the little

volume that he imparted to the public, from the press of Newport-Pagnell; but as the poem is singularly beautiful, and seems to have been re-touched by its author, with an attention proportioned to its merit, I shall introduce it here, in a corrected state, and notice such variations as I find in the two copies before me.

ON

FRIENDSHIP.

AMICITIA NISI INTER BONOS ESSE NON POTEST.
CICERO.

1.

What virtue can we name, or grace,
But men unqualified and base,
Will boast it their possession?
Profusion apes the noble part
Of liberality of heart;
And dullness of discretion,

2.

But as the gem of richest cost
Is ever counterfeited most;
So always imitation

VARIATIONS.

I——1. What virtue, or what mental grace.

II——If ev'ry polished gem we find,
Illuminating heart or mind,
Provok'd to imitation,

Employs the utmost skill she can
To counterfeit the faithful man,
The friend of long duration.

3.

Some will pronounce me too severe,
But long experience speaks me clear,
Therefore, that censure scorning,
I will proceed to mark the shelves,
On which so many dash themselves,
And give the simple warning.

VARIATIONS.

No wonder friendship does the same,
That jewel of the purest flame,
Or rather constellation.

III——No knave, but boldly will pretend
The requisites that form a friend,
A real, and a sound one;
Nor any fool he would deceive,
But prove as ready to believe,
And dream, that he has found one.

4.

Youth, unadmonish'd by a guide,
Will trust to any fair outside:
An error soon corrected!
For who, but learns, with riper years,
That man, when smoothest he appears,
Is most to be suspected.

5.

But here again a danger lies;
Lest, thus deluded by our eyes,
And taking trash for treasure,
We should when undeceiv'd, conclude
Friendship imaginary good,
A mere Utopian pleasure.

VARIATIONS.

IV——1. Candid, and generous, and just
2. Boys care but little, whom they trust.

V——2. Lest, having misemploy'd our eyes,
4. We should unwarily conclude
5. Friendship a false ideal good.

6.

An acquisition rather rare
Is yet no subject of despair;
Nor should it seem distressful,
If either on forbidden ground,
Or, where it was not to be found,
We sought it unsuccessful.

7.

No friendship will abide the test,
That stands on sordid interest
And mean self-love erected;
Nor such, as may awhile subsist
'Twixt sensualist and sensualist,
For vicious ends connected.

VARIATIONS.

VI——3. Nor is it wise complaining,
6. We sought without attaining.

VII——5. Between the sot and sensualist.

8.

Who hopes a friend, should have a heart
Himself, well furnished for the part,
And ready on occasion
To shew the virtue that he seeks;
For 'tis an union, that bespeaks
A just reciprocation.

VARIATIONS.

VIII—— Who seeks a friend, should come dispos'd,
T' exhibit, in full bloom disclos'd,
The graces and the beauties,
That form the character he seeks,
For 'tis an union that bespeaks
Reciprocated duties.

Mutual attention is implied,
And equal truth on either side,
And constantly supported:
'Tis senseless arrogance, t' accuse
Another of sinister views,
Our own as much distorted.

But will sincerity suffice?
It is indeed above all price,
And must be made the basis.

9.

A fretful temper will divide
The closest knot that may be tied,
By ceaseless sharpt corrosion:
A temper passionate and fierce
May suddenly your joys disperse
At one immense explosion.

10.

In vain the talkative unite
With hope of permament delight:
The secret just committed
They drop through mere desire to prate,
Forgetting its important weight,
And by themselves outwitted.

11.

How bright soe'er the prospect seems,
All thoughts of friendship are but dreams,
If envy chance to creep in.

VARIATIONS.

But ev'ry virtue of the soul
Must constitute the charming whole,
All shining in their places.

An envious man, if you succeed,
May prove a dang'rous foe indeed,
But not a friend worth keeping.

12.

As envy pines at good possess'd,
So jealousy looks forth distress'd,
On good, that seems approaching;
And, if success his steps attend,
Discerns a rival in a friend,
And, hates him for encroaching.

13.

Hence authors of illustrious name,
Unless belied by common fame,
Are sadly prone to quarrel;
To deem the wit a friend displays
So much of loss to their own praise,
And pluck each other's laurel.

14.

A man renowned for repartee,
Will seldom scruple to make free,
With friendship's finest feelings

Will thrust a dagger at your breast,
And tell you, 'twas a special jest,
By way of balm for healing:

15.

Beware of tatlers! keep your ear
Close-stopt against the tales they bear,
Fruits of their own invention!
The separation of chief friends,
Is what their kindness most intends;
Their sport is your dissension.

16.

Friendship that wantonly admits
A joco-serious play of wits
In brilliant altercation,

VARIATIONS.

XIV——5. And say he wounded you in jest,

XV——Who keeps an open ear
For tatlers, will be sure to hear
The trumpet of invention.
Aspersion is the babler's trade,
To listen is to lend him aid,
And rush into contention:

Is union such as indicates,
Like hand-in-hand insurance-plates,
Danger of conflagration.

17.

Some sickle creatures boast a soul
True as the needle to the pole;
Yet shifting, like the weather,
The needle's constancy forego
For any novelty, and show
Its variations rather.

18.

Insensibility makes some
Unseasonably deaf and dumb,
When most you need their pity.

VARIATIONS.

XVI——1. A friendship, that in frequent fits
Of controversial rage, emits
The sparks of disputation.

XVII——3. Their humour yet so various,
They manifest their whole life through
The needle's deviation too,
Their love is so precarious,

'Tis waiting, till the tears shall fall
From Gog and Magog in Guildhall,
Those playthings of the city. *

19.

The great and small but rarely meet
On terms of amity complete:
'Th' attempt would scarce be madder,
Should any, from the bottom, hope
At one huge stride, to reach the top
Of an erected ladder.

* This was written before the removal of them

VARIATIONS.

XIX—3. Plebians must surrender,
And yield so much to noble folk,
It is combining fire with smoke,
Obscurity with splendor.!

Some are so placid and serene,
(As Irish bogs are always green)
They sleep secure from waking,
And are indeed a bog, that bears
Your unparticipated cares,
Unmov'd, and without quaking.

20.

Courtier and patriot cannot mix
Their het'rogeneous politics
Without an effervesence,
Such as of salts with lemon-juice,
But which is rarely known t' induce,
Like that, a coalescence.

21.

Religion should extinguish strife,
And make a calm of human life:
But even those, who differ
Only on topics left at large,
How fiercely will they meet and charge!
No combatants are stiffer.

VARIATIONS.

XX——4. Like that of salts with lemon-juice,
Which does not yet like that produce
A friendly coalescence,

XXI——4. On points which God has left at large.

22.

To prove, alas! my main intent,
Needs no great cost of argument,
No cutting and contriving.
Seeking a real friend we seem,
T' adopt the chymist's golden dream
With still less hope of thriving.

23.

Then judge before you chuse your man,
As circumspectly as you can,
And, having made election,

VARIATIONS.

XXII——1. To prove at last my main intent,
Needs no expence of argument,

Sometimes the fault is all your own,
Some blemish in due time made known
By trespass or omission:
Sometimes occasion brings to light
Our friends' defect, long hid from sight,
And even from suspicion.

XXIII——1. Then judge yourself, and prove your man.

See, that no disrespect of yours,
Such, as a friend but ill endures,
Enfeeble his affection.

24.

It is not timber, lead, and stone,
An Architect requires alone,
To finish a great building,
The palace were but half complete,
Could he by any chance forget
The carving and the gilding.

VARIATIONS.

4. Beware no negligence of yours.

That secrets are a sacred trust,
That friends should be sincere and just,
That constancy befits them,
Are observations on the case,
That savor much of common-place,
And all the world admits them.

XXIV—1. But 'tis not timber, lead, and stone.
3. To finish a fine building.
5. If he could possibly forget.

25.

As similarity of mind,
Or something not to be defin'd,
First rivets our attention;
So manners decent and polite,
The same we practis'd at first sight,
Must save it from declension.

26.

The man, who hails you Tom or Jack,
And proves by thumping on your back
His sense of your great merit,
Is such a friend, that one had need
Be very much his friend indeed
To pardon, or to bear it.

VARIATIONS.

XXV——3. First fixes our attention;

XXVI——1. The man, that hails you Tom or Jack,
And proves by thumps upon your back,
How he esteems your merit.

27.

Some friends make this their prudent plan ——
" Say little, and hear all you can !"——
Safe policy, but hateful !
So barren sands imbibe the show'r,
But render neither fruit nor flow'r,
Unpleasant, and ungrateful.

28.

They whisper trivial things, and small;
But to communicate at all
Things serious, deem improper.
Their fœculence and froth they show,
But keep their best contents below,
Just like a simm'ring copper

VARIATIONS.

XXVII——1. Some act upon this prudent plan——
XXVIII——The man (I trust) if shy to me,
Shall find me as reserv'd as he.
No subterfuge or pleading
Shall win my confidence again.
I will by no means entertain
A spy on my proceeding.

29.

These samples (for alas! at last
These are but samples, and a taste
Of evils, yet unmention'd)
May prove the task, a task indeed,
In which 'tis much, if we succeed,
However well-intention'd.

30.

Pursue the theme, and you shall find
A disciplin'd and furnish'd mind
To be at least expedient,
And, after summing all the rest,
Religion ruling in the breast
A principal ingredient.

31.

True friendship has in short a grace
More than terrestrial in its face,
That proves it heav'n-descended

VARIATIONS.

XXX—— Pursue the theme, and you shall find
Goodsense and knowledge of mankind,

XXXI——The noblest friendship ever shown
The Saviour's history makes known,

Man's love of woman not so pure,
Nor when sincerest, so secure,
To last 'till life is ended.

VARIATIONS.

Tho' some have turn'd and turn'd it,
And, whether being craz'd, or blind,
Or seeking with a bias'd mind,
Have not (it seems) discern'd it.
Oh friendship, if my soul forego!
Thy dear delights, while here below,
To mortify and grieve me;
May I myself at last appear!
Unworthy, base, and insincere!
Or may my friend deceive me!

This sprightly little poem contains the essence of all, that has been said on this interesting subject by the best writers of different countries. It is pleasing to reflect, that a man, who entertained such refined ideas of friendship, and expressed them so happily, was singularly fortunate in this very important article of human life. Indeed he was fortunate in this respect to such a degree, that providence

seems to have supplied him most unexpectedly, at different periods of his troubled existence, with exactly such friends, as the peculiar exigencies of his situation required. The truth of this remark is exemplified in the seasonable assistance, that his tender spirits derived from the kindness of Mrs. Unwin, at Huntingdon, of Lady Austen and Lady Hesketh, at Olney, and of his young kinsman, in Norfolk, who will soon attract the notice, and obtain the esteem of my reader, as the affectionate superintendant of Cowper's declining days. To the honor of human nature and of the present times, it will appear, that a sequestered poet, pre-eminent in genius and calamity, was beloved and assisted by his friends of both sexes, with a purity of zeal, and an inexhaustible ardour of affection, more resembling the friendship of the heroic ages, than the precarious attachments of the modern world.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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